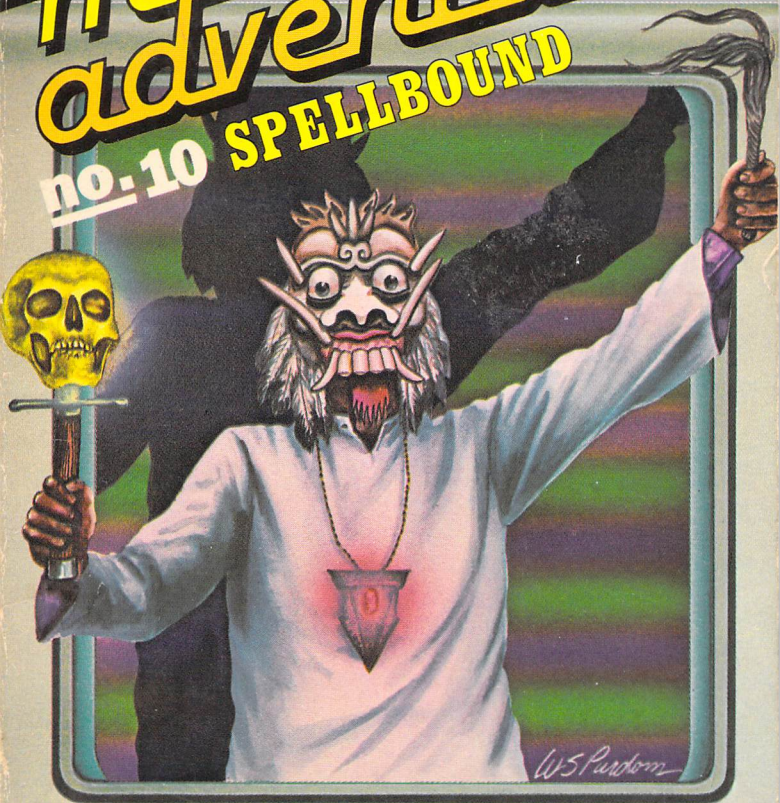


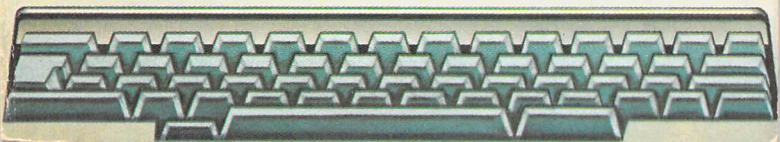
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micro adventure™

no. 10 SPELLBOUND



by Megan Stine and H. William Stine



MICRO ADVENTURE™

10
**SPELL-
BOUND**

by

Megan Stine

and

H. William Stine

Programming by Susan M. Zakar

A Parachute Press Book



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01

Warning: The following information is crucial to the success of your mission. Read it carefully. It may save your life.

As a certified member of ACT (the Adventure Connection Team), your job, as always, is to defend the cause of good against evil. It won't be easy, because BRUTE (the Bureau of Random Unlawful Terror and Evil), the international organization bent on wreaking havoc throughout the world, will be fighting you every step of the way. Your computer expertise will be vital to this mission. So turn on your home system. Throughout this adventure you'll be called upon to program it to get the ACT team out of some really tough spots. The text will tell you if the program won't run as is on your computer. If it won't, consult the Reference Manual in the back of the book for modifications for your computer.

Good luck! This message will be erased from memory in 30 seconds.

CHAPTER

1

The phone on the floor starts ringing and you decide to take a chance. You turn your back for a minute — maybe less. Why not? After all, what can go wrong in your own room? Sure, it's filled with all kinds of computers and experimental equipment — standard paraphernalia for the number-one crack computer whiz on the Adventure Connection Team. But most of the equipment is disguised so completely with magazines, posters, dirty clothes, guitar amplifiers, cassettes, and fruit-juice boxes that even your best friends don't suspect that you're anything other than an ordinary teenager.

But you've forgotten one thing: You should never turn your back on your friend Larry Qualen, not even to answer the phone. A bull in a china shop is a picture of delicacy and grace compared to Larry when he gets within six feet of a computer.

“Don't touch that!” you practically shout at him when you see what he's just picked up.

“Why? It's just a new Jogman cassette

player, isn't it?" Larry asks innocently. Meanwhile, he's dangling your brand-new top-secret experimental ACT microcomputer as if it were a yo-yo.

"Larry, listen to me carefully," you say. You don't want Larry to drop a million dollars worth of hand-held technology. So you force your voice to remain calm. "Sure, it's just a cassette player, but this one is special. I earned every penny of it myself. And I paid *retail* — no discount!"

Larry may not understand technology, but he knows the relationship between hard work and making money. "Why didn't you say so in the first place?" he says, setting the computer back on your desk. "Who was that on the phone, anyway?"

"Wrong number," you lie.

Two seconds later, the micro Larry was holding starts beeping like rush hour traffic. It's an ACT urgent message signal! You've got to connect the computer to your modem and your modem to your telephone immediately. But first you've got to get rid of Larry.

"Why is it doing that?" Larry says, staring at the small electronic box that so obviously *isn't* a cassette player at all.

It's a reasonable question. You hope you can come up with a reasonable answer. "Larry, you're not going to believe this," you say with confidence, "but that signal means there are too many people in the room. The Jogman

comes with a circuit that just goes crazy when someone other than the owner comes too close.”

“Of course I believe it,” Larry says. “If they can build cars that talk to you, why not this? See you tomorrow, bucko.” Popping a handful of caramels into his mouth, Larry leaves.

No, you probably won't see me tomorrow, you think to yourself. Considering the way your computer is trying to get your attention, something big is going on — something big and potentially dangerous. In a few minutes you'll probably be hitting the road for who-knows-where.

Once you hook up the modem, the message starts automatically printing itself out onto your dot matrix printer. But it's in code, of course. So you reach for the latest issue of Marvel Comic's *X-Men* and place a special transparent sheet over the last page. The transparency reveals a secret BASIC program and this month's password: STARLIGHT.

Input the following program and run it. Use the password and then type in the coded message one line at a time.

PROGRAM 1

```
100 REM DECODE
110 GOSUB 900:READ MX$
120 AA=ASC("A")
130 PRINT "ENTER PASSWORD ";
```



```

14Ø INPUT PW$
15Ø PRINT "TYPE 'STOP' TO END"
16Ø PRINT "ENTER YOUR MESSAGE";
17Ø INPUT MG$
18Ø IF MG$="STOP" THEN 32Ø
19Ø FOR I=1 TO LEN(MG$)
20Ø A$=MG$:SB=I:SE=1
21Ø GOSUB 800:LT=ASC(XC$)-AA
22Ø IF(LT<Ø)+(LT>25)THEN 29Ø
23Ø L=L+1
24Ø IF L>LEN(PW$)THEN L=1
25Ø A$=PW$:SB=L:SE=1
26Ø GOSUB 800:CP=ASC(XC$)-AA+1
27Ø X=CP+LT:IF X>26 THEN X=X-26
28Ø A$=MX$:SB=X:GOSUB 800
29Ø PRINT XC$;
30Ø NEXT I
31Ø PRINT:PRINT:GOTO 16Ø
32Ø END
33Ø DATA QAZPLOW SXIKECDUJMVRFYNHBTG
800 XC$=MID$(A$,SB,SE):RETURN
900 HOME:RETURN

```

The program will run as is on the Apple II+ and IIe. See page 115 of the Reference Manual for changes for other computers.

SKTAWII WX TQTB

KIGPQ PAPMRHDHQBD

LSUOBMGEO DC QIXIOTQL

EH GDYMRAXSF

IDMSRHPMBX QXQBDS XWLG PQN

Since signing up as the computer whiz on the Adventure Connection Team, you've handled some pretty weird assignments. But come on, guys. Voodoo? Why would BRUTE, an organization of maniacal scientists, military strategists, and full-time terror-vendors, throw out all of its nuclear weapons for voodoo? This has got to be someone's idea of a joke.

Still, orders are orders, you tell yourself as you quickly pack. The secret escort car is probably already waiting for you. From now on you can no longer call yourself by any name other than your personal code name — Orion. And your first duty is to guard your computer from falling into BRUTE hands — in other words, to guard it with your life.

You speed out of your house and leap directly into Larry Qualen, who is walking back up the steps toward your house.

"I forgot to tell you that I won't see you tomorrow," Larry says. "My dad's taking me somewhere for my birthday, but he won't tell me where. It's all a top-secret surprise. Where are *you* going?"

"To buy you a birthday present, Larry," you shout over your shoulder without breaking stride. "There's my uncle's truck. Bye!"

You dash across the street to a white laundry truck, appropriately marked "ACTION Laundry — it's a dirty business."

You slide into the passenger seat, giving the driver your code name. But he doesn't ac-

knowledge you. Instead he just stares straight ahead and starts to drive. In seconds he's up to five miles an hour.

Your mind quickly goes over some good reasons why this guy is driving so slowly. He just got his driver's license. He's really serious about conserving gasoline. He's trying to trick any BRUTE agents who may be observing you. He doesn't know where second gear is.

You think of all these things while he creeps along for about a block. Finally you have to say something.

"Hope I'm not going to be late," you say.

Suddenly the driver falls forward, his head hitting the truck horn.

"What's the matter with you?" you yell. "Are you trying to get us both killed!?"

Then he falls over sideways into your lap and you suddenly understand. He doesn't have to try any harder to get himself killed. He already has a large knife in his back!

You push him off you with a shudder and open his shirt front. You're looking for an ACT I.D. tag around his neck, but instead you find a strange, faceless little doll — a voodoo doll. There's a pin stuck in the doll's back — exactly where the driver was stabbed!

CHAPTER

2

You reach for the truck's two-way radio, hoping it will put you in touch with headquarters, fast. But suddenly a hand comes through the driver's side window and grips your wrist. The face attached to the iron-grip hand belongs to a tough-looking young woman. She has a large revolver in her other hand, and you wish you had something besides a stupid doll in yours. She glares at you, at the dead body, and at you again.

"Don't just sit there like a statue," she barks. "If you've got a code name, I want to hear it now!"

"Orion," you say, letting out a breath and realizing that she is an ACT member.

"I'm Speedo," she says.

"But your real name is Mr. Earl?" you ask, quoting the old rock 'n' roll song with a laugh.

"There's no time for jokes," she says. "Come on. Get behind me on my motorcycle."

She kick-starts the cycle and roars through traffic with you hanging on behind her. Conversation is almost impossible, but she tries shouting background material to you anyway.

“That poor guy knew something was wrong. He requested a backup, but I couldn’t get there fast enough,” she screams.

“Did you see anything?” you yell back.

“Yeah, but I don’t believe what I saw,” she says. “When I pulled up, I saw a real ugly little guy get into the biggest Cadillac I ever saw. Then he took off like the thing had a jet engine.”

“BRUTE?” you shout.

“A BRUTE agent? Honey, this character was smaller than a paper boy. Here’s my advice: If you end up having to catch the little creep, forget the heavy guns and break out the mousetraps.” Speedo’s laugh nearly drowns out the motorcycle engine.

“What *is* my assignment? Where am I going?” you ask.

“Reno, kid,” she shouts. “Here’s why: One by one, every major sports superstar has been acting like a jerk. Two days ago, the world’s winningest jockey refused to climb on a horse because he was suddenly allergic to animals. The police found a voodoo doll in his locker — just like the one you’re holding.”

She’s right. For some reason you’re still clutching the voodoo doll with the pin in its back.

“Yesterday, a big-deal football kicker’s leg went numb on him and he hooked six balls in a row into the stands instead of over the goal post.”

“So?” you say.

“So they found a black orchid in his locker. Don’t ask me where it came from.”

“OK, but I’m a computer expert, not a witch doctor. What am I supposed to do?”

“Honey, every available ACT member has been assigned to some big sports event. They’ve got linguists covering wrestling. Munitions guys watching croquet. You’re lucky. You’re going to cover the world heavyweight boxing championship,” Speedo says as she zips between cars you couldn’t fit a sheet of paper through.

“So what do I do when I get there?” you ask.

“Orion, it’s no big sweat. All you have to do is find out whether BRUTE is involved. If they’re not, it’s small potatoes and we’ll leave it for some hot-shot investigative reporter to clear up. But if BRUTE does have its dirty hands in this game, then it’s up to us to find out why — and stop them.”

Just then you look around Speedo’s shoulders and see that she is aiming the motorcycle straight at a six-foot-high barbed-wire fence.

“Hold on,” she shouts.

She hits a hidden ramp, guns the engine,

and the bike arcs into the air. It lands, bounces, and then lands for good.

“Welcome to ACT’s new secret airstrip,” Speedo says, cutting off the motor. “The plane will be coming down right behind that building. You’ll be back tomorrow after the boxing match. I’ll pick you up then.”

“Great. I’ll pick up my stomach then, too,” you say.

You both watch a small jet come quickly out of the clouds and land. It taxis to the side of the building and waits with its door open for you.

“Here, you take this,” you say, handing Speedo the voodoo doll. “As a good luck charm.”

“I’m not the one who’s going to need it, toots,” she says, and walks away.

You get on board quickly and strap yourself into your comfortable seat. What a relief after that bike ride. The jet takes off as quickly as it landed.

En route to Reno, you watch a videotape of the heavyweight boxing champion, Moses Caulfield. He has never fought a professional match that lasted more than six rounds. Maybe he’s not the most stylish boxer, but he certainly is one of the strongest. About the only opponent who could outlast him in a ring would be a giant redwood tree.

But then your thoughts are interrupted by

the smell of something burning. The plane is still flying steady, so you decide it's safe to unbuckle and walk to the cabin.

"Is lunch burning?" you ask the pilot with a laugh as you open the door.

Your smile quickly fades at the sight of the pilot slumped over in his chair, losing consciousness. The cockpit is filled with a yellow gas which is shooting out from under the controls. You hold your breath and clamp on an oxygen mask from a compartment above you.

The pilot is alive, but he's out cold. Not even oxygen revives him. It looks as if you're on your own — 30,000 feet above ground.

You try to swallow, but it's like swallowing a large cotton ball. The control panel of this speeding jet blinks at you like a pinball machine.

And it's your turn to play.

CHAPTER

3

You sit down in the pilot's seat and look out the window at the near-black sky. The gas seems to be dissipating. At least for the moment, you're still safely airborne. But you don't know how fast you're going, or how high you are, or where you are, or how you'll get down. The first thing you do is reach for the one thing in the cockpit you do recognize: the radio. You send out a distress signal. *Distress?* You send out a panic signal!

No one answers at first. No answer at all. There isn't even a crackle on the radio. You don't want to admit it, but you know the radio is dead. Whoever killed the pilot also fixed the radio . . . and fixed your fate, too.

You stare at the dials, levers, and buttons in the cockpit. All of them seem to stare back at you — but silently. You're afraid you won't live long enough to find out what most of them do. But you've got to start somewhere.

Hey — you just remembered: You've landed lots of planes in airports all over the

country using a flight simulation game on your computer! So naturally your first question is, “Where’s the joystick?”

Your little joke seems to relax you enough to grab one of the controls and try it.

Gradually you figure out how to slow the plane down, how to sort of steer it, and how to make it descend.

The navigational computer — one thing you’re sure you *can* work — tells you you’re approaching Reno and you’re right on target for the Reno airport. You’re at 30,000 feet right now, so you’ll have to start your descent soon. The radar screen is showing you lots of blips. But you’re flying through a heavy cloud bank now and can’t see beyond the nose of the jet. Those blips on the screen could be other aircraft or mountains for all you know.

The on-board computer tells you that you must descend in stages. At each point, you have to decide the speed of your descent and the angle of descent.

If you come down too fast, or at too sharp an angle, you’ll crash. If you fly off the edge of the screen, you’ll be in the flight path of another plane.

Talk about going to Reno to gamble — this is the risk of a lifetime!

Input the following program and run it. Lines 140, 250, 260, 270, 300, 310, and 960 must each be typed as one line. Enter the speed

and the descent factor (from 1 to 10) when prompted. Try to land your plane at X.

PROGRAM 2

```
100 REM PLANE
110 GOSUB 900:GOSUB 960:GOSUB 970
120 RM=SW:BM=SH-4:LP=SW-1:HW=30
130 PV=1:PH=1:NV=1:NH=1
140 VT=BM:HT=SW-1:GOSUB 910
    :PRINT "X";
150 VT=PV:HT=PH:GOSUB 910
160 PRINT " ";
170 VT=NV:HT=NH:GOSUB 910
180 PRINT ">";
190 PV=NV:PH=NH
200 VT=BM+1:HT=1:GOSUB 910
210 RX=30:GOSUB 930:HW=HW+RD-15
220 PRINT "HEADWIND IS ";HW;" "
230 PRINT " DESCENT?->";:INPUT DC
240 PRINT " SPEED? ->";:INPUT SP
250 NV=INT(PV+DC):NH=INT(PH+
    (SP-240)/10)
260 IF (NV=BM)*(NH=LP)*(DC<3)*
    (SP<300) THEN 300
270 IF (NV<1)+(NH<1)+(NH>SW)
    THEN 310
280 IF (NV>=BM) THEN 320
290 GOTO 150
300 GOSUB 900:PRINT
    "SUCCESSFUL LANDING":END
310 GOSUB 900:PRINT "OUT OF SKY!"
    :END
320 GOSUB 900:PRINT "CRASH!!":END
900 HOME:RETURN
```

```
91Ø VTAB(VT):HTAB(HT):RETURN
93Ø RD=INT(RND(1)*RX)+1:RETURN
96Ø NU$=CHR$(Ø):SW=4Ø:SH=24
      :KZ=-16384:KW=-16368:RETURN
97Ø RETURN
```

This program will run as is on the Apple II+ and IIe. See page 117 of the Reference Manual for changes for other computers.

The wheels of the jet bounce along the runway. It's a little bumpy, but somehow you've made it down safely.

You slump back in the seat smiling, your heart pounding in your throat.

Out the cockpit window, a station wagon loaded with people, a red light flashing on its roof and the F.A.A. insignia on its door, speeds up to the jet.

Men and women in suits jump out of the station wagon, waiting for you to get out of the jet.

“What kind of a stunt was that? You can't land without radio clearance!” a man yells at you.

“Kid, I'm going to make sure they yank your license,” another man says.

“I don't have one,” you answer.

The man turns pale. His mouth forms a series of silent words, which are interrupted by the arrival of another car — a blue limo that has a more familiar look.

Several ACT agents get out of the limo, flash their IDs at appropriate people, and practically carry you into the backseat. No words are exchanged.

As the ACT car speeds off, you explain to the agents what happened in the jet.

Ten minutes later the ACT car pulls up in front of the arena where the championship fight is just about to start. The agents give you an entrance pass and say good-bye.

Inside, the arena is packed. There are so many spectators squeezed into the aisles, all the way up to the ring, that it's hard to believe there will be room for the fighters, too.

The people are chanting for their favorites — mostly for Moses Caulfield, the champion. But there are a few hundred voices supporting Bernard Ruiz, the challenger, as well.

Ruiz is already in the ring, waiting, looking tight and tense. You decide to push your way toward the small square in the middle of the arena. But the crowd pushes back. No one wants to yield an inch.

Meanwhile you're watching the faces as you push past, looking for a familiar face or a face that seems out of place. If something goes wrong here tonight, it's your job to find out one way or another if BRUTE was the cause.

Suddenly the hall explodes in a volcano of voices and applause. The champion has finally come out of his dressing room and is

making the long walk to the ring.

People are throwing flowers at the champ, patting him on the back, cheering him on. Women try to hug and kiss him.

“Moses! Moses! Moses!!”

The bell clangs and the two men in the ring run at each other like speeding trains on the same track.

Bernard throws the first punch. The crowd roars. Bernard throws the second and Moses looks stunned. But more than that, the *crowd* looks stunned. *You* look stunned. No one can believe what’s happening in the ring — that Moses Caulfield has not even raised his arms to defend himself. In fact, as Bernard Ruiz takes one clear shot after another at the champion’s face, Moses simply stands there with his huge arms motionless, pinned to his sides.

This is impossible. It’s so unbelievable that you forget what may be causing it. Right now, at this exact horrible moment of confusion, is when a BRUTE agent might show himself. But you can’t take your eyes off the ring because you know you’re seeing something so bizarre that sportswriters and fans will talk about it for years to come.

Just then the crowd closes in on you and you can’t see the fighters anymore. You try to dodge, push them out of the way. But it’s hopeless. You’ll have to wait for the wall of people to open again.

People begin booing, shouting that the

fight is fixed. And a sizable segment of the audience is also yelling, “Stop the fight! Stop the fight!” But the referee isn’t listening to the crowd — and neither is Bernard Ruiz.

Then fist fights break out among the spectators. And you turn your attention to one particularly noisy brawl between Ruiz’s manager, a beer vendor, and a TV sports commentator. That’s when you see a face that stops you cold.

CHAPTER

4

In the two years you've been working for ACT, nothing like this has ever happened to you — and you're not prepared for it! Sitting ringside are Larry Qualen and his father.

Your eyes meet for a fraction of a second. *What are you doing here, Larry?* you think to yourself. But you instinctively spin and run in the opposite direction. You don't know where you're running, but you've got to get out of sight.

Finally the crowd's roar begins to sound like an angry beast that's falling farther and farther behind you. Then silence, except for your own footsteps. Now, at least, you can do some thinking.

And you realize that you've been a complete fool. The last time you saw Larry may *seem* like a week ago, but it was only this afternoon. And Larry told you then that his dad was taking him somewhere special for his birthday. This is it — this is Larry's birthday surprise. You could have, should have, ex-

plained your presence to him in the same way. But instead, you panicked — and maybe blew your cover for nothing.

The sound of other footsteps in the hall breaks your concentration. Light, quick steps. Then you see a man at the opposite end of the hall. You stare at each other, much like the way Moses and Bernard stared at each other 10 minutes ago.

The man is short, ugly, and the skin of his face is folded and creased as if there were too much skin for the size of his small skull. His hair is a mass of greasy black curls. Is he the man Speedo saw rushing from the laundry truck earlier today?

Suddenly he shrieks foreign, angry words and runs right into you, almost knocking you down. When he stretches up to hit you, he reaches only to your stomach. So you push him away with your foot and he lands hard against a wall.

But he stands up quickly, hissing at you like a snake and shrieking words you still cannot understand. Then he leaps and wraps his arms around your legs and attaches himself by biting your leg.

You yell and twist and swat at him, but you can't get him loose. Finally he lets go and you crumple to the floor moaning. He waits to make certain that you are in sufficient pain, then he escapes.

You're near Moses Caulfield's dressing

room and you can hear that a crowd is on its way. You'd better not be on the floor when it rolls through.

You limp into the champ's dressing room and hobble over to the training table where you splash your leg liberally with iodine and rubbing alcohol.

The alcohol feels like a thousand needles stuck in your leg, but it's no worse than the bite from that ugly little bowling ball with legs. Does he have something to do with what went on in the ring?

The door opens again and a crowd of reporters, photographers, trainers, and managers squeezes into the room. In the middle of the crowd, wrapped in his robe and his disgrace, is the *former* heavyweight champion of the world, Moses Caulfield.

"I could have made jelly out of him," Moses shouts at the tv cameras. "You *know* who I am! But I couldn't move my arms!"

"Moses, were you afraid of him? Was it psychological paralysis?" a reporter asks.

"I have fought men five times his size. I am afraid of no man! I tell you I couldn't move my arms. I wanted to, but I couldn't move my arms!" Moses says.

"Hey, Moses, take a look at this," the manager says, pulling a burlap sack no bigger than a hand out of Moses' locker.

Inside the bag is another wax doll. The small, faceless figure is just like the one you

saw around the neck of the driver in the ACT truck. But this doll has a strange red symbol painted on its dress. And instead of one pin, it has two — one stuck in each of the doll's arms, pinning them to its sides.

Moses takes one look at the doll and instinctively steps back.

“Where did you get that?” he asks.

“It was in your locker, Champ,” the manager says.

Like flies to unwrapped meat, the reporters surround Moses with microphones and cameras.

“Clear the room,” you shout, trying to halt the questions. But everyone ignores you.

“Who are you, kid?” Moses' manager asks, taking you by the arm away from the crowd. “I don't see no press pass on you.”

You open your ACT identification just long enough for the manager to read it. Then you quietly ask him again to clear the room.

The room is empty in less than a minute.

“Are you for real, kid?” Moses asks when the reporters are gone. “I've read about you ACT guys, but no one ever says you really exist.”

“We exist,” you say, holding your leg and limping into a chair. “And we're made out of flesh and blood, too.”

“What happened to you?” Moses asks.

You're silent while the manager takes a look at your leg and quickly puts an ice pack

on it. Then he leaves the two of you alone.

“Did you see a short, ugly man to-night?” you ask.

“Yeah,” the champ says. “Me! When you lose, that makes you short and ugly. And when you lose like I did,” he says, sweeping the voodoo doll off the table, “that makes you nothing!”

“You don’t really believe in voodoo, do you?” you ask.

“When you grow up in my neighborhood, kid, you believe that anything cruel and evil is possible,” Moses says. “This doll comes from the bayou. From Beau Loire, where I was born. You know where that is?”

You shake your head.

“It’s in Louisiana. But a part of Louisiana that’s so isolated, so uninhabited, so desolate, it might as well be on another planet. Supposedly bayou means creek, but we’re talking stagnant, swampy, marshy — *dead*.”

Moses pauses for a minute and you can see he’s remembering what it was like to grow up there.

“Those red markings — I’ve seen them in Beau Loire all my life,” Moses says, nodding toward the voodoo doll.

“Moses — there’s something I’ve got to ask you,” you say, looking him in the eyes. “Can you move your arms *now*?”

“No,” the champ answers in a small, bitter voice. He has been sitting on the edge of

the table. Suddenly he jumps down and kicks the wall with all his strength.

“I’m sorry you lost your title,” you say.

“That’s not the problem. If I get my arms back, there’ll be a rematch. It’s in my contract. But I hope you get this business cleared up first,” Moses says.

“I don’t think we’re going to get involved,” you say. “I just came here to check it out.”

“Listen to me: Get involved. You don’t think whoever’s doing this is going to stop with a couple of sports stars, do you? There’s something very bad going on here. I can smell it,” Moses says.

Later, from a Reno motel room, you phone in your report to ACT headquarters. What you’ve seen may be unexplainable and unbelievable, you tell them, but if you go by the book, you can’t confirm any BRUTE involvement. The ugly little man isn’t a known BRUTE agent, and it’s not their style to send an “outsider” alone. Besides, he’s too dumb to work for BRUTE. His bite is worse than his bark. Still, in your heart, you know BRUTE is behind this.

“OK, that’s your report, Orion,” the ACT mission coordinator says. “Now what does your gut tell you?”

“This is just the tip of the iceberg, ma’am,” you say.

She’s quiet for a minute. You know her;

you know that she's scratching her elbow while trying to decide which to react to — your report or your instincts.

“OK, I'll put a team together and clear them to fly to Louisiana,” the coordinator says. “But not you, Orion. You're going home.”

“Home?” you say.

“*Home*, Orion. There's no indication that computers are involved in this operation. I want you to sit this one out,” the coordinator says.

“But wait a minute,” you say. “I've just got to be on this team. Someone killed my driver. And when they gassed my pilot, they were trying to kill me! What makes you think it's safe for me to go home at this point?”

“I'm not following you, Orion. Why would BRUTE, or whoever is behind this, particularly want *you* out of the way?” the coordinator asks.

“I don't know. Maybe they think I know more than I do,” you say. “Or maybe, just maybe, they have a reason for wanting to eliminate the computer expert on the team. All I know is that someone tried to stop *me* from getting to Reno and I want to find out why.”

There's a long silence on the other end of the phone.

“Put me on the team,” you say.

“OK, I'll give it a try,” she says finally. “I'll tell you something: This is the craziest team I've ever put together. But maybe it's just crazy enough to work.”

CHAPTER

5

Early the next morning, you are tramping your way through some prime Louisiana swampland. Even at this hour it is hot, and so humid that your clothes are soaked with sweat. Your legs slog heavily from the combination of the weight of your backpack and the softness of the swamp mud.

The rendezvous point for this ACT mission is a small and out-of-the-way fishing hole deep in the bayou. As usual, the ACT coordinator was less than specific about whom you'd be meeting. But she said you'd know each other by your fishing poles and a code phrase.

At 10 AM you finally come to a quiet clearing with a small lake that's more like a dirty puddle. Dragonflies are doing flight maneuvers over the steamy surface of the water. And the mosquitoes are thrilled to see you because now they can divide their attention between you and the two men who are fishing.

You study the fishermen. Are they your teammates? One of them looks like he's half-

smoking and half-*eating* a cigar. His movements are nervous, quick, and to the point. He's always on the alert in all directions. The other man is ancient-looking, tall, slow — and so thin the sun practically shines through him.

“What are you using for bait?” you ask, taking out your fishing pole again.

The old thin man shields the sun so he can get a look at you. The other man glances quickly at your pole while he covers the rest of the area with his eyes.

“Code name?” the nervous man asks.

“Orion,” you say.

“Orion's a computer whiz kid,” the nervous man says to the thin man. Then he looks at you again. “I'm Parrot. This is Doc, medical expert on rare diseases. Headquarters thinks it's possible that this voodoo activity is really some kind of new germ warfare, so Doc's here to analyze any victims we find. He's also here to save our behinds in case BRUTE starts to play dirty, if you know what I mean.”

You don't exactly, but this guy doesn't give you a chance to say so. Parrot jerks to his feet and clamps a wet hand over your mouth.

Parrot's hyperactivity has been triggered by the fact that another man has come into the clearing around the lake. The three of you stare as he drops his backpack with a sigh. He's a young man, about thirty, with wild red hair and a bizarre black beard that comes to a point at

his chin. He's wearing aviator sunglasses, Tyrolean leather hiking shorts with no shirt, and when he turns around you can see that he has a large cloth bunny tail sewn on the back of his pants.

"How do you like my camouflage, guys?" he says with a laugh.

His face doesn't click in your mind at first, but the laugh is unmistakable.

"You're Ralph Rosenblum, the Pizza Demon!" you say. "Your commercials are on TV all the time."

"You're all right, kid," he answers, pulling off the fake black goatee. "We're going to get along just fine." Then he takes one look at Parrot and smiles. "Well, lookee here," he says in a loud voice. "I come three thousand miles and walk forever in this steamy, people-forsaken swamp, just to run into my college roommate. What is this? *Candid Camera*?"

"Will you keep your voice down? And use code names!" Parrot says. He's obviously surprised to see Ralph.

"Code name, Skull," Ralph says. "I got to pick that one myself. Appropriate for an expert on voodoo and the occult, wouldn't you say?"

"Expert on voodoo and the occult?" you say.

"Yep, Ph.D. and all," Skull says. "But I got bored with teaching. And besides that, I

almost ended up eating my diploma, I was so broke and hungry. That's when I discovered how to make a 'devilishly' delicious pizza and became the Pizza Demon! I've got some free coupons in my backpack, kid. Remind me to give some to you — *if* we live through this mission. No sense wasting them on you now."

"OK, let's talk fast," Parrot says, snapping back into control. "And I don't want any trouble from you, Skull. We don't want to attract too much attention. All of you have been cleared to hear this background. I'm not with ACT. I'm CIA. I was brought over to keep a lid on this project. We're talking low profile and high sensitivity here," Parrot says. "If certain parties discover that we are investigating a voodoo plot, it could be very embarrassing for us. I'm not at liberty to say more."

Parrot is interrupted by a large camper with a jeep hitched to its rear bumper, crashing through and over the swamp brush at highway speeds.

"OK, this is obviously an outsider. We're just four people on a fishing trip, got it?" Parrot says, sitting down quickly and casting his line in the water.

But before the rest of you have to pretend you know how to fish, the RV's door swings open and Speedo hops out.

"Just in case you guys haven't caught us any dinner, I've got some steaks in the refrigerator," she says loudly.

“I can see it’s going to be difficult keeping this mission *quiet*,” Parrot says, glaring in Speedo’s direction.

“Hey, Orion, long time, no see,” Speedo says, dropping the voodoo doll you gave her in your lap. She laughs at the surprised look on your face. “Um, I see a lot of empty fishing lines. If you’re not catching anything, maybe the lake’s cursed.”

“Doc and Skull — meet Speedo, our ace transportation expert,” Parrot says. “She can drive, pilot, or steer anything that even remotely qualifies as a vehicle.”

“Welcome to the swamp,” Skull says.

“Hey, aren’t you Ralph Rosenblum, the Pizza Demon?” Speedo exclaims.

“Code names only,” Parrot snaps. “And that’s enough chitchat. We’ve got to get moving soon. Does anyone have any questions?”

“Yes,” you say. “I want to know if Skull really believes that this voodoo thing works?”

“I believe in it,” Doc says. “Two years ago, my hospital sent me to investigate an African village where people were dying like flies. There were other doctors with me — all experts on every kind of disease known to man. But no one on the team could find a trace of disease in these people, so we couldn’t do anything for them. We just had to let them die, one by one, until that village didn’t exist.”

“How could that happen?” you ask.

“We found out later that the village had

been cursed in a struggle for power between two witch doctors. Of course, the curse also applied to anyone who entered the village.”

“Say, hon, that means you walked face-first into that curse. But you lived through it,” Speedo says. “How do you explain that?”

Doc opens his shirt. His flesh — what little there is of it — is stretched tightly across his bones. He’s just a thin layer away from being a skeleton. “When I walked into the village, I weighed 170 pounds. This is what happened to me after that mission. Nobody can stop the weight loss. It’s as if my body were eating itself alive,” Doc says. “I’ll bet you’d be surprised to hear that I’m only 42 years old.”

Everyone is silent for a minute. You had guessed his age at around 70. Parrot speaks. “Well, back to the original question. Skull, Orion wants to know *your* position on voodoo.”

“That’s a tough question, kid,” Skull says. “Because in some ways I’m just like everybody else. I’d love to believe in magic, curses, witchcraft, *revenge*. It’s great stuff, isn’t it? It’s so colorful. But I’m a scientist, and I’ve gotta go by the evidence. Now I’ve seen a lot of spooky behavior among the people who practice voodoo and similar black magic stuff, and I’ve seen a lot of things I can’t *explain*. But I’ve never come across a single, irrefutable piece of hard evidence to prove that a voodoo curse, or a hex, or a hold, or a fix, actually worked. The short answer is: I don’t know.”

CHAPTER

6

“We’ve got a stopwatch running on this mission, and we have reason to believe BRUTE knows we’re here,” Parrot says, bringing you back to business — something he’s obviously used to doing. “Let’s pack up and hit the road.”

“Not so fast,” Skull says. “It’s still question and answer time, and I’m raising my hand. Level with us. What’s the deep background on this mission? What’s it really all about?”

Parrot hesitates a minute and then gives in.

“Okay. The World Amateur Games are going to be held in Russia in a few days,” he says. “My agency strongly suspects that the American athletes may be BRUTE’s next sports target.”

“Isn’t that just a little bit Mickey Mouse for BRUTE?” Speedo says. “I mean, what do they care about some sports event that’s been cooked up by the tv networks to keep them busy during non-Olympic years?”

“It’s very simple,” Parrot replies. “Our ambassadors went to a lot of trouble to convince the Soviets to host these first games. We had to promise that there’d be no political maneuvering — no pulling out of the games at the last minute like with the Olympics in 1980 and 1984. So you can see what would happen if we suddenly said our athletes had come down with a bad case of voodoo and couldn’t compete.”

“The Soviets would never believe it,” Doc says. “It would be a slap in the face.”

“Or worse,” Parrot says. “Diplomatic chaos, maybe even military chaos — who knows. That’s why we’re taking this mission seriously. And there’s another reason for getting involved: because we never trust *anything* BRUTE does. Don’t ever forget that.”

“Let’s get moving. We’ve been here long enough to be observed,” Skull says.

The five of you are a team now. Like any team, you grind gears a little at first, but you set off after the same goals.

“First thing we need to do is nose around the locals. Let’s talk to them about voodoo and see what that turns up,” Skull suggests.

“OK, think quick, Orion,” Parrot says. “What are you doing wandering around the swamp?”

“I’m just a hitchhiker, sightseeing my way across the country,” you say.

Parrot smiles, so you know your answer was fast enough and sneaky enough to please even a CIA agent. Then he gives you a sweatband to wear around your forehead at all times.

It looks like a well-used, seldom-washed sweatband, but you recognize it. It's really a homing device and a two-way radio.

You separate from the group, knowing that at least they can hear everything you do.

You walk for half an hour without seeing another living creature — except for a lizard that scurries across your path. He's probably wondering what you're doing invading his turf. Occasionally the swamp smells of pine, but mostly your nose tells you that the bayou is a place where things go to die.

"This place is deserted," you say softly.

"Probably canceled for lack of interest," Speedo says through the internal speaker in your sweatband.

"Limit your airtime, Speedo," Parrot says. "We don't want anyone to pick us up."

"Oh, no!" you say involuntarily, staring in absolute horror at a tree up ahead.

"Orion, what is it?" Speedo asks.

"It's a girl about my age. She's tied to a tree, hanging by her wrists," you say.

"That is not voodoo, man," Skull says calmly. "It sounds like torture to me."

"Great. That cheers me up a lot," you say sarcastically, running toward the tree.

“Hold on,” Parrot says. “You’re supposed to blend in, not stir things up.”

But you ignore Parrot’s remark. You quickly cut the girl down, remove the gag from her mouth, and offer her your canteen.

“She is Evil’s slave. And you shouldn’t have spared her,” a voice calls out. You spin around, but the voice seems to come from every direction.

“You got a face as well as a voice?” you call.

The girl stands facing you. Her dark eyes stare deeply into yours. And she seems completely unconcerned that a dozen men and women, some with rifles and some with clubs, are stepping out of the swamp. Their faces are hot and sweaty, but their expressions are cold and distrustful.

“She cursed my son and now the boy’s dead. She’s gotta pay for that,” a man says.

“How did he die?” you ask him.

“Awful. He was swimming and got attacked by an alligator — just like she said.”

“She is marked with Evil,” a woman says, running over to the girl and ripping off the kerchief that covers her hair.

The girl’s dyed blonde hair is cut short and striped blue on the sides. “Yeah, for sure, like I really killed him,” she finally says to you, shaking her head in disgust. “And like I started World War II, too. These people are ridiculous, you know?”

“Well, what *did* happen?” you ask her.

“Oh, that kid was a total jerk, you know? Always pestering me. So I told him, I said, ‘Forget it, man. Like I’d rather go out with an alligator, you know?’ ”

“This isn’t voodoo. This is culture shock,” Speedo says with a laugh through your radio sweatband. It makes you laugh, too.

“What are you laughing at?” the red-faced man says, cocking his rifle.

“Orion, keep the situation cool. I’m tracking you, but I’m not close enough yet,” Speedo says.

“You think an alligator eating my boy is funny? You think she didn’t conjure up an alligator when there’s none closer than five miles from here?”

“I think that when something you can’t explain happens, you don’t kill the first person who looks strange to you,” you say.

“Nobody asked you to interfere in this matter,” someone in the crowd says.

“We’ve been cursed since she showed up,” someone else says. “People disappearing, animals coming from the swamp. It’s unnatural.”

The crowd agrees noisily, and birds squawk and flap in the surrounding trees.

“Hey, like I’m really sorry you’re having a bum summer, you know?” the young woman says. “But get off my case.”

Suddenly the man raises his rifle and the swamp explodes with smoke.

CHAPTER

7

Fortunately for you, the smoke was from a hand grenade explosion about half a mile *behind* you and not from the rifle in front of you.

“That’s the best I can do, Orion,” Speedo says in your sweatband radio. “I hope you’re running like the wind right now.”

Running?! You knew you forgot something. You’ve been standing there with a shocked look on your face just like the crowd around you. You grab the girl’s arm and take off.

When you finally take a safe breather, which in this humid, thick air is more like gasping, she begins to snap back.

“Like am I dead?” she asks you, suddenly coming out of her stunned silence. You shake your head no. “Wow . . . why not?”

“I don’t care how you explain it to her, Orion,” Parrot barks in your headband. “But if you blow your cover, I’ll see to it that your next assignment is selling Tofutti to the Eskimos.”

“Uh, he missed us. Must be a terrible shot,” you say to the girl, smiling faintly.

She starts walking again, at first not noticing that you aren’t walking with her. Suddenly she turns around and stares at you.

“What’s your name?” she asks.

Oh, boy. And you thought explaining why you’re not dead would be tough. For a second you listen to the buzz and burp from the choir of nearby swamp animals.

“Careful, Orion,” Parrot whispers in your ear.

“Orion,” you say.

“Wow, excellent name,” she says. “Mine’s Valerie.”

“People around here must think you’re from the moon,” you say with a laugh.

“These people aren’t all bad, you know,” Valerie says. “There’s really a whole lot of weird stuff going on and it’s easier for them to blame me.”

“What kind of weird stuff?” you ask.

She stops talking and walks silently for a while. And you follow. Lizards slither and scurry off the path in front of you. Valerie tries to catch a couple.

“That’s where I live,” she says, pointing straight ahead. There, surrounded by heavy old trees, is a new little house with solar panels on the roof.

“Where did this come from in the middle of a swamp?” you ask.

“It’s a modular house. You can build it anywhere,” Valerie says. “My dad came down here to work in some big industrial plant or something, you know. But he and my mom were, like, always fighting, so I said I wanted to move out. So like he had this house built.”

“A modern house in the middle of nowhere . . . an industrial plant in the middle of swamp? What’s going on, Orion?” Parrot prompts you.

“What does your father do?” you ask.

“When he’s home he fights with my mom. When he’s not home, I don’t know. His plant is about 50 miles from here,” Valerie says. “Wow, look. There’s Grendle.”

You’re looking for another lizard, but this time Valerie is pointing to an old woman who is dressed in many layers of clothes. She comes out of the house, looks in your direction, and then hurries off the other way.

“Who’s she?” you ask.

“She’s like a for-real witch doctor, you know?” Valerie says. “She steals things out of my house.”

“You mean people practice voodoo and all that down here?” you ask.

“Yeah, well, like there’s no cable TV, so you gotta do something,” Valerie says. “You hungry? I’ll go do up something outrageous in the microwave.”

Valerie races off into her house, leaving you standing in the front yard being watched

by curious eyes . . . some of them human.

You keep moving, walking around the house and reporting everything you see to the rest of the team through your headband. But there's not much to report. Everything about the house looks normal — until you look up at the roof. Next to the television antenna is a second antenna.

“It could be a radio,” Parrot says. “I’ll bet it’s a radio. Search the house.”

You follow the lead wire with your eyes down from the roof, across a wall of the house, and then you climb through a window into a small room filled with books, maps, and globes.

Nearby you can hear the sounds of Valerie in the kitchen, opening the refrigerator, washing something in the sink, opening drawers and cabinets.

But there on a table in the room where you are, just as Parrot gleefully predicted, is a radio receiver and transmitter.

“Valerie must be a ham operator,” you say, quickly checking out the radio. With one eye on the radio and one eye on the open door to the room, you put on the headphones, switch on the radio, and tune around.

At first, all you hear is the usual blur of voices and Morse Code, all of it friendly and none of it about BRUTE or voodoo.

But then you turn a switch on the side of the radio, a switch you don't recognize. With the switch on, the radio flips by frequencies

on “auto-scan” and the voices and codes are all suddenly scrambled. Wait a minute — they aren’t *all* scrambled. You think you hear something that sounds clear.

“There’s a scrambler on the radio,” you say into your sweatband radio. “It’s filtering out all standard signals.”

“What’s coming through unscrambled, Orion?” Speedo asks.

“I’m not sure, but it could be BRUTE,” you say slowly.

“Of course it’s BRUTE. We’ve got them. Great work, Orion,” Parrot says. “Now all you have to do is trace the signal and we’ve got the location of their transmitter.”

You still can’t believe that Valerie has anything to do with BRUTE, but you can sort that out later. Right now you’ve got to move fast to track down the BRUTE signal before Valerie starts looking for you. Luckily, your computer can log right into the radio.

Input the following program and run it. Lines 230, 240, 250, 320, 370, 380, 400, 430, 440, 940, 950, and 960 must each be typed as one line. The boxes on your screen represent transmissions from various areas. The letters in only one box spell out a real message. You can try to read all the messages in all the boxes. Or you can use this program to identify which is the area that represents BRUTE’s clandestine transmission. Number the boxes 1 to 9 from

left to right. So, for example, the top left box is 1 and the box in the dead center is 5. Then type the number of one of the boxes and the program will test that area for clandestine activity. Then try another. When you've found the right area, try to read the message.

PROGRAM 3

```
100 REM TRANSMIT
110 DIM MS(50)
120 L1$="!----!----!----!"
130 L2$="!    !    !    !"
140 GOSUB 960:GOSUB 970:GOSUB 900
150 VT=1:HT=1:GOSUB 910
160 PRINT L1$
170 FOR I=1 TO 3
180 FOR J=1 TO 3
190 PRINT L2$
200 NEXT J
210 PRINT L1$
220 NEXT I
230 READ MN:FOR I=1 TO MN
   :READ MX:MS(I)=MX:NEXT I
240 FOR I=1 TO 9:READ VX:V(I)=VX
   :NEXT I
250 FOR I=1 TO 9:READ HX
   :H(I)=HX:NEXT I
260 RX=9:GOSUB 930:XT=RD
270 RX=9:GOSUB 930:BX=RD
280 IF BX<>XT THEN 320
290 N=N+1:C$=CHR$(MS(N)+ASC("A"))
300 IF N=MN THEN N=0
310 GOTO 330
```

```

32Ø RX=25:GOSUB 93Ø
    :C$=CHR$(RD+ASC("A"))
33Ø VT=V(BX):HT=H(BX):GOSUB 91Ø
34Ø PRINT C$;
35Ø FOR I=1 TO WU:GOSUB 94Ø
36Ø IF KY$=NU$ THEN 41Ø
37Ø KK=ASC(KY$)-ASC("Ø")
    :IF KK=XT THEN 39Ø
38Ø VT=SH-2:HT=1:GOSUB 91Ø:PRINT
    KK;" NORMAL TRANSMISSIONS"
    :GOTO 41Ø
39Ø VT=SH-2:HT=1:GOSUB 91Ø
40Ø PRINT KK;
    " CLANDESTINE ACTIVITY"
41Ø NEXT I
42Ø GOTO 27Ø
43Ø DATA
    22,11,14,6,8,13,1,17,2Ø,19,4
44Ø DATA
    5,14,17,2,4,13,4,19,22,14,17,1Ø
45Ø DATA 3,3,3,7,7,7,11,11,11
46Ø DATA 3,7,11,3,7,11,3,7,11
47Ø END
90Ø HOME:RETURN
91Ø VTAB(VT):HTAB(HT):RETURN
92Ø FOR WS=1 TO WT:NEXT WS
93Ø RD=INT(RND(1)*RX)+1:RETURN
94Ø KY$=NU$:KY=PEEK(KZ):IF
    KY<128 THEN RETURN
95Ø KY$=CHR$(KY-128)
    :POKE KW,Ø:RETURN
96Ø NU$=CHR$(Ø):SW=4Ø:SH=24
    :KZ=-16384:KW=-16368:RETURN
97Ø WU=1Ø:RETURN

```


The program will run as is on the Apple II+ and IIe. See page 119 of the Reference Manual for changes for other computers.

Now you've got a clue — BRUTE transmissions — and you know the general direction. But where is that going to lead you? To two BRUTE agents with a radio transmitter? Or a hundred of them? And what's this got to do with the voodoo plot?

You climb back out of the house through the window again. It's a bad idea to let Valerie find you near the house, so you head for something scenic — the thick weeds. Suddenly the weeds part with a quick sweep of an arm and you are standing face to face with the old woman, Grendle.

“What do you want?” she says in a husky voice. One of her eyes is in a permanent squint. She, too, like the little man who fought you at the arena, has too much skin for her skull so that it hangs in dark folds. “Warts on the tongue of your enemy? Maybe a love potion?”

“Got anything for dandruff?” you ask.

She kicks your legs out from under you so that suddenly you're sitting in the soft earth in front of her. “You do not fool me. You believe. And you are marked. I can see that Bakulu has marked you,” she says. She spits on her crooked thumb and draws a figure on your cheek with it. Then she covers your face with her palm and pushes you over on your back.

“Orion!” Valerie calls from her house.

You turn toward Valerie’s voice and answer, “I’ll be right there.” When you turn around again, Grendle is gone.

“Orion, this is Skull. What happened?”

“She just drew something on my cheek,” you say.

Valerie finds you in the weeds and takes you back to her house. In a mirror in her bathroom, you discover that the mark Grendle has drawn on your cheek is blood-colored — and is the exact duplicate of the mark on Moses Caulfield’s voodoo doll.

“You’ve been cursed. Somehow she knows that you’re a danger to her,” Doc says.

You scrub your face in the sink and check the mirror again. The mark is gone, but the uneasy feeling of seeing that bloody symbol on your own skin lingers on.

“Orion, here’s a hot tip for you: Our computer has just checked — there’s no industrial plant 50 miles or 200 miles from here. Let’s hear what your friend Valerie has to say about that.”

CHAPTER

8

“I’ll bet it’s great living here by yourself,” you say to Valerie, digging into the plate of fresh vegetables she’s put on a table for you.

She looks at your backpack by the door and says, “I’ll bet like it’s great hitchhiking all over.”

You both laugh.

“Hey, have you read in the paper about all the sports stars getting voodoo charms and curses and then blowing their games?” you ask.

“Yeah,” Valerie says, munching some celery.

“Can Grendle do any of that stuff?”

“Her cat like had a two-headed kitten. Grendle said she made it happen,” Valerie says.

“Do you think she could conjure up an alligator to eat that kid?” you say.

Valerie obviously knows more about the alligator than she’s saying. She turns on some dance music and goes outside. You follow her.

“You don’t want to talk about your father, you don’t want to talk about Grendle, you don’t

want to talk about voodoo or alligators. What do you want to talk about?" you ask.

"Like who are *you*?" she asks.

"Someone who's passing through and seeing the sights," you say.

Valerie makes a face at you and pretends to put her finger down her throat. "When did you start out? This morning?" she snaps. "You don't have a tan, so you haven't been on the road more than an hour. You're not from a big city or you'd be saying, 'Oh wow, like look at that, it's a rock, man, it's a tree.' So who are you?"

"Orion, this sounds like trouble. Be careful. We're on our way," Parrot says. It's been so long since anyone on the team has talked to you through the sweatband that it startles you for a minute.

"No," you say.

"No? What kind of turtle-face answer is that?" she asks.

"Deliberately confusing?" you ask.

"Look, if you want to find out what's going on here, go back and talk to the jerks who live here. I just want people to leave me alone," Valerie shouts, running away toward the weeds and into the swamp.

When she's out of your sight, you hear her scream. You grab a rock as you run after her.

Valerie is frozen in her tracks, staring at a spider with legs a foot long. You see it and hurl the rock immediately, scaring the bug away.

“You think that’s magic? You think that’s voodoo?” she says. “That’s what happens when people destroy a habitat. The animals have to go somewhere, right? And sometimes they’re pretty strange animals because we’ve never seen them before.”

“What habitat has been destroyed?”

“Theirs — that spider’s and the alligator’s the other night,” Valerie says. Now she is looking directly at you and speaking to you in an entirely different voice. “My own father is destroying the swamp and chasing the animals away from their homes.” She shakes the low branch of a nearby tree with all her strength. “He works for BRUTE . . . oh, forget it. You wouldn’t understand. And if you did, it would cost you your life.”

“Keep her talking,” Parrot says through your sweatband.

“I’ll take care of this,” you say.

“It’s a little out of your league,” Valerie says, thinking you were talking to her. “What are you supposed to do when it’s your parents?”

“You’ve got to do what’s right,” you say. “Tell me what’s going on.”

“Wow — I don’t believe it,” Valerie says with a cruel laugh. “I just had a flash . . . You’re an ACT agent, aren’t you?”

You just stare at her, not saying yes or no.

“You should have left me on that tree. Nothing bad would have happened to me then.

They'll kill us all now," Valerie says, sighing sadly.

"Not if you help me," you say.

There's a long pause while Valerie stares off into the woods. Finally she speaks.

"BRUTE has built a high-tech underground headquarters in the swamp. That's why all the animals have fled," she says. "My father supervised the construction, and now he's the plant manager. He runs the place."

You hear a long, low whistle in your headband and Parrot says, "A U.S. headquarters! Washington will never believe that they've penetrated so deep."

"But why here? What does BRUTE want with the bayou?" you ask.

"They've found a witch doctor who really knows what he's doing. His name is Bakulu — that's all I know. He's already done his number on those sports stars."

"But what's next?" you ask.

"I don't know. When I found out this much, I split. I told my father I couldn't live with his secret anymore. So BRUTE built this house for me so I could be by myself. Of course, they also sent Grendle to watch every move I make," Valerie explains.

"Where's their headquarters?" you ask.

"I don't know. I really don't," Valerie says. "Besides, Grendle's probably listening to every word we say."

"So is my team," you tell her.

Suddenly Valerie slaps your face hard and you stumble back. When she opens her hand there's a large, smashed mosquito in it.

"This is one of Grendle's tricks. These mosquitoes can spit poison into you and they're attracted by the mark she drew on your face," Valerie says.

The air starts to get thick — but not from the intense humidity. The swamp is filling up with flying insects that are trying to surround you, moving with you every place you move.

"I've got to get out of here," you shout.

"You might as well lie down and let me kick the dirt over you, Orion. You'll never get out of this swamp alive," Valerie says.

CHAPTER

9

Oh yes, I will get out of here alive, you think to yourself as you dart and dodge the mosquitoes. After all, you've gotten out of tight spots before. But just the same, you're grateful when a car horn beeps behind you and Speedo comes roaring up in the Jeep with Parrot, Skull, and Doc bouncing in their seats.

"Jump in, hon, We've been discovered," Speedo yells. She guns the engine while Parrot snaps photos of Valerie and her house.

"Come with us," you say to Valerie as you climb into the Jeep. "We'll protect you."

Valerie smiles. "Yeah, sure. Maybe you don't know it, Orion, but, like, you're on the losing side. Nobody's going to hurt me in my own house."

Parrot is too nervous to wait for further discussion.

"Where to?" Speedo asks.

"I've got a fix on BRUTE's location," you

say. “At least I think I can lead us to their transmitter. Head north.”

Speedo lead-foots the Jeep north through the heavily overgrown area.

“If we cover every inch of the area, we’re bound to find what we’re looking for,” Skull says.

The swamp gives the car’s four-wheel drive a real workout — through thick mud, over fallen trees. Occasionally there’s a flat place, almost like a road, but not often.

“Now listen, Orion, here’s the situation,” Parrot says, filling you in on what’s happened. “Maybe we have that girl to thank for this — I don’t know — but one way or another BRUTE found out we’re here. They fire-bombed the RV while you were gone. Most of our supplies and technical equipment went to blazes. This is going to make our work more complicated by about a hundred times, I can tell you that. We sure don’t outnumber them but we’re going to *outsmart* them!”

Speedo drives for hours without a break and without spotting a single sign of BRUTE’s newly-built headquarters. Your eyes ache and your bodies are rubbed sore from the ride and from your soaking clothes. Even when the sun sets, the heat still wraps you like a blanket.

“We’re getting close to something,” Doc says, crossing his arms tightly across his chest.

“How do you know?” Speedo asks.

“I can feel spirits,” Doc replies.

You and Skull both look at each other and roll your eyes.

“It’s getting too dark to drive,” Speedo says a few minutes later. “If I use the headlights, we might as well send BRUTE a flare.”

“Then let’s camp for the night,” you say. Compared to the Jeep seat, the hard ground is going to feel great for a few hours.

The five of you sit in the dark, eating food out of tins and tubes in the glow of Parrot’s cigar. This is one of those strange moments during a mission when there’s nothing to do except wait for something to happen. You can relax, but you can’t let your guard down — because you know for certain that now that BRUTE knows you’re in their territory, something will happen soon.

The silence is broken by the radio signaling the transmission of an urgent coded message. You quickly load the BASIC decoder program and enter your secret password — STARLIGHT. Then you type in the scrambled message.

**XXJQXGIB DKDOMB FRXX
QHAFQXFCX BAGVKU
MVLZGFN
MVFU AZXJASWH EDONFMT
FJ SNRRFS PTIZ
CBVQD
MFIW HPBHJHIDAS**

But what comes out is more scrambled nonsense — pure gibberish! For some reason, the decoder program isn't working.

“Maybe the computer's been cursed,” Skull jokes.

Everyone watches silently over your shoulder as you try unsuccessfully to solve the problem.

Just when you're about to give up, Parrot clears his throat and says hesitantly, “Uh, try a different password . . . try mine: CRACKERS.”

An urgent *team* message but only one person on the team can decode it? This is very unusual and it doesn't go down your throat easily. But you try the message again.

“Team expendable? What's that supposed to mean?” Speedo asks.

“I'm not at liberty to say,” Parrot says. He sounds definite.

“Why was that message sent for your eyes only?” you ask.

“I have my orders,” Parrot says. He still sounds definite, but a little more nervous than before.

“Oh, come on, Percy. You're being a total pain,” Skull snaps at Parrot.

“Code names only, Skull! You never know who's monitoring this conversation,” Parrot says.

“You were a pain when we were in college and you're still a pain. If we're a team,

you'd better start treating us like one. End of message," Skull says and walks off to one of the tents.

"What difference does it make?" Doc says. "We're all going to die. You're worried about BRUTE agents? The agents of the *loa* are everywhere in this swamp. We are all marked."

Doc walks away, too, making strange sounds to himself.

"Doc doesn't know it," Parrot says, "but he just bought himself a ticket home. He's off the team tomorrow. Let's get some sleep."

What's this mission all about? you wonder as you lie awake in your tent. An entire team of American athletes won't be able to participate in the World Amateur Games. So what? There's got to be something more to it. *Parrot knows more than he's telling*, you think, becoming surprisingly drowsy.

Smoke drifts through your nostrils and into your dreams. A barbecue back home, your mom and dad disagreeing about how hot the coals should be. . . .

Minutes later something snaps you out of your dream and onto your feet. Heat. Lots of heat. The tent is on fire!

You race for the flaps, pulling them apart — but they're tied together from the outside. You've got to get out some other way! Choking on thick smoke, you try to dig your way under the tent. But someone outside is stepping on your hands as you try to scrape the

dirt away. Three sides of the tent are on fire and the heat is blistering.

Suddenly a knife pierces the fourth wall of the tent. You jump back, away from the long, thin blade. It must be BRUTE! They've discovered the camp and are killing you off, one by one. The knife cuts into the tent again. This time the canvas rips open and an arm grabs you out into the smoky but fresh air.

When you open your eyes, the face you see is a friendly one. *Skull*, not BRUTE, has pulled you out of the burning tent and he quickly slips an oxygen mask over your face. As the smoke clears, you see Doc's frail body running around the camp carrying a torch. The last thing you knew, Doc was asleep in your tent.

"Orion's the cursed one," Doc is yelling. "Orion has the mark. Why should we all have to die?"

Parrot makes sure that everyone's out of the way and then turns and shoots Doc as though it were just another day at the shooting gallery.

Once the first shock passes, you realize that Parrot is holding a tranquilizer gun in his hand. He throws his cigar on the ground, but he immediately lights another one.

"These things happen," Speedo says to you, putting her arm around your shoulders. "Sometimes they put a guy on the team, but he doesn't work out. He can't take it. He

cracks. It doesn't mean he's a bad person."

"It just means that he's a danger to all of our lives," Parrot says. "Speedo, get him out of here. Drive him to the nearest town, check him into a motel. You can catch up with us later. Orion, contact headquarters and tell them we've got a scratch in this race. They can pick him up and take him home."

Speedo and her damaged cargo are out of camp in minutes.

"We've got to move, too," Skull says, "You-know-who probably saw that fire."

Truer words have seldom been spoken. Suddenly the perimeter of your campsite glows green and the circle of green light grows larger and larger, enclosing you.

"Do not attempt to escape," a voice calls out through a microphone, "or you will be electrocuted by the force field. You are the prisoners of BRUTE."

CHAPTER

10

There is only so much struggling you can safely do with an energy force field around your body and a short-fused mob of BRUTE bullies walking every step with you. As a matter of pride, you don't walk willingly with them, but you also don't want to provoke a hasty and angry retaliation.

The goons shove Skull, Parrot, and you into small, separate motorboats that are docked in a nearby narrow bayou.

The boats' motors are very quiet, but slow. As you make your way upstream, you have plenty of time to wonder what danger might lie ahead. One thing's for *sure*, however. Since the BRUTE escorts did not blindfold you to prevent you from seeing the route to their headquarters, they obviously don't intend to ever let you leave there alive.

Near dawn, birds begin to leave their nests. Black shadows cross the gray sky. But your boat and the other escort boats are nearing their nest. The small bayous you've trav-

eled through have become narrower and narrower, finally ending at the foot of a marshy hill. Rising up from the base of the hill is a large rock formation. As your boats draw closer, a part of the rock near the waterline opens. The engines are turned off and you drift, almost silently, where no ACT agent has ever been before — through the entrance of BRUTE's headquarters, U.S.A. branch.

Inside, you step out of the boats onto a concrete docking platform. Your eyes go everywhere; you've pushed the button in your mind that says video record.

The building is made of concrete walls with massive steel doors leading to angular hallways that twist and turn. From the design of the place, it's obvious that no one cares about creating a cheerful work environment. The only object here is invulnerability. And on that score they've done an excellent job.

Swiveling television cameras mounted on gun turrets watch every step your party takes. Guards check passes and search people thoroughly before opening the huge, electronically operated doors.

"I'm definitely telling my franchises not to make any pizza deliveries to this address," Skull says as you ride down in an elevator to another level.

Parrot takes one look at the global war rooms and says in a worried voice, "If they

built all of this just to house Bakulu, he must be death on wheels.’’

You are taken through another dark hallway with thick, concrete walls and finally led into the only sizable space you’ve seen in this gloomy underground fortress. Unlike the rest of the headquarters, this room is streaked with sun coming from a skylight cut out of the ceiling of rock. One end of the room is filled with exotic plants and large chairs, some made of wicker and bamboo, one a throne of carved stone, big enough to make you feel like a gnat.

‘‘This looks like a Hawaiian restaurant I know in San Diego,’’ Skull says. He walks around examining many of the voodoo signs and symbols embedded in the throne.

‘‘I’d say this is definitely the witch doctor’s waiting room,’’ Parrot says.

You hear a scratching noise and look up in time to see a muskrat run across the glass skylight, which has become a surprising but acceptable part of his forest floor. His speedy dash casts a tiny, fleeting shadow across the concrete slab you’re standing on.

But your thoughts return to underground level when the door opens and a BRUTE officer enters the room. He is tall, balding, and probably 50ish, but he looks 30. His face stares in a fixed, contemptuous glare. In his eyes you are either someone he can kill or someone who wants to kill him.

At the sight of him, your legs almost go out from under you. This has to be the infamous Commander Fovera — you've seen his photo in a dossier on BRUTE agents. It's the same Commander Fovera who once sent a communication to ACT headquarters begging them to recruit more young people like you because he enjoys killing them so much.

Following him is a small, three-legged dog that hobbles into the room and jumps into Fovera's lap. Fovera sits and stares at the three of you for a few minutes before speaking. He will not let you sit down.

“You are ACT agents Skull and Orion, and CIA agent Parrot, otherwise known as Percy,” he says, stroking the crippled dog. “Undoubtedly you must know who *I* am. I am doubly pleased by the compliment ACT has paid to me. I am pleased that ACT cares enough to send the very best. And of course, I am also delighted to have the opportunity to exterminate three of ACT's best operatives.”

Anything a normal person says in three words, Fovera says in twelve. He seems to be in love with the cold, emotionless sound of his own voice.

“OK if I sit down? This is taking forever,” you smart off with a yawn. It's time your team got some points on the board.

“Orion, do you know how my poor Chou-Chou lost her leg?” Fovera says, still speaking

with complete serenity in his voice.

Suddenly he jumps out of his seat and with his face three inches from yours, screams, “*I RIPPED IT OFF FOR DISOBEYING ME!!!*”

Parrot and Skull have to hold you up to keep you from passing out.

“Luck and nerve — that’s what living in this world is all about. That’s what I’m going to test first. Your luck and your nerve. I have in mind a simple game, played for very high stakes,” Fovera says. “If you win, you will all walk out of this building tomorrow. You will be free. But if you lose, I will slaughter you one at a time in front of each other.”

Fovera presses a button on his chair, and when another BRUTE agent enters the room, Fovera asks him to send Bakulu in. Fovera does not feel the necessity to fill the waiting time with any conversation. You stare at each other until the door opens.

Bakulu enters the room with the small, ugly man you met in the boxing arena walking several paces behind him. Bakulu is very tall and is wearing a feathered headdress that makes him look even taller. Lying on the long, white silk shirt he wears is a gold medallion that has the same design that Grendle drew on your cheek.

Bakulu bows first to a carved statue. Then he seems to go into a deep trance. Finally he signals to Fovera with a small nod of his head

that he is now prepared to listen.

Fovera strikes fear in people with a sledge hammer. Bakulu uses a thin needle. He does not raise his voice, he does not look at anyone who speaks to him. It doesn't matter now whether you believe in voodoo or not. You have never been more scared of anyone in your whole life.

The one chink in Bakulu's armor is revealed when he speaks. "Bakulu's stones tell Fate," he says in a halting voice, struggling with the words of a language he obviously has not spoken for very long.

"The game, like Life and Death, is simplicity itself," Fovera says to the three of you. "You will choose the number of stones representing Life. You will tell Bakulu how many stones to take away. No matter what number you say, he will double it. Then he will take *his* turn. He will always remove *one* stone. The object is to avoid taking the last stone, for that stone is Death! If you take the last stone, you die! Who wishes to play for your fate?"

"You're our leader, Percy, special security password and all," Skull says. "You play."

"What about you?" Parrot says. "You're the one who knows all this hoodoo-voodoo. *You* play," he says to Skull.

"No — wait!" you say, furiously typing a program into the computer that the BRUTES let you keep with you. "I think you'd better take a look at this. Maybe *no one* should play."

Input the following program and run it. Play the game several times. Is it possible to win?

PROGRAM 4

```
100 REM STONES
110 GOSUB 900
120 PRINT "THE LAST STONE IS DEATH"
130 PRINT "PICK A NUMBER."
140 INPUT N
150 PRINT:PRINT "I WILL DOUBLE IT."
160 N=INT(N)*2
170 PRINT:PRINT "I WILL TAKE 1."
180 N=N-1:PRINT "THAT LEAVES ";N
190 IF N=1 THEN 280
200 PRINT:PRINT "HOW MANY FOR YOU?"
210 INPUT K
220 PRINT:PRINT "I WILL DOUBLE IT."
230 PRINT "AND TAKE THEM AWAY."
240 N=N-INT(K)*2
250 IF N<=1 THEN 280
260 PRINT "THAT LEAVES ";N
270 PRINT:PRINT:GOTO 170
280 PRINT "YOU GOT THE LAST ONE"
290 PRINT "YOU DIE.":END
900 HOME:RETURN
```

This program will run as is on the Apple II+ and IIe. See page 121 of the Reference Manual for changes for other computers.

CHAPTER

11

“My computer program proves that we can’t win at this game,” you announce to Fovera. “Your charade has just been a trick to make us think we had a chance to live.”

Fovera breaks into another uncontrollable rage and charges after you, ripping the computer out of your hand. He slaps you with the back of his hand. He cocks his arm again and swings to hit you. But he is stopped in mid-swing. In a blur of motion, Bakulu lifts the BRUTE agent off the ground simply by squeezing Fovera’s wrist in one of his powerful hands.

Fovera squirms, but like a fish on a hook, his fight is useless. When he is calm, Bakulu sets him on his feet again and Fovera reluctantly chooses to hold his temper against Bakulu.

“Well, fix them and get it over with. What are you waiting for?” Fovera snaps.

Bakulu examines the computer, turning it

over and over in his large hands. Then he gives it back to you.

“Forget it. You’d never understand it,” you tell him.

He walks slowly in front of each of you, placing his hands on Parrot’s forehead, on his cheeks, on his eyes, and chanting something in a strange and different language. Then, kissing the gold medallion, he goes on to repeat the ritual with Skull.

You are the last to receive the curse. And it isn’t his strange words that frighten you most. It is the power his voice suddenly assumes when he speaks his own language. You *feel* cursed. You *feel* there is a power overtaking your body—a power that you do not control.

Bakulu leaves the room, followed by his short, ugly companion. Fovera sends for the guards to take you to a cell.

“Be seeing you,” Skull says, to mock Fovera.

Fovera spits on the ground. “I will open the door to your cell in half an hour,” he says, wrapping the length of his dog’s leash around his hand. “If by some chance you are still alive, you will wish a thousand times that Bakulu’s death curse had worked faster!”

Then the guards grab you. By the time you reach the cell, you are doubling over from a pain slicing into your stomach. The guards are carrying you, with your feet dragging limp behind you. They dump you on the floor.

As soon as the cell door is locked, Skull tells Parrot to pick you up.

“You’ve got to get a hold of yourself, Orion,” Skull says.

“I’m dying,” you say, and the words turn the pain in your gut up to nine.

“You’re not,” Skull says.

“How do you know?” Parrot asks.

“Listen to me, Orion. Are you listening to me?!?” Skull asks, slapping your face quickly. “I’m the voodoo expert. Black orchids, card games, curses to your face — that’s not voodoo!”

“Voodoo dolls,” you moan. “I’ve seen them.”

“But a *hungan*, a voodoo priest, doesn’t send them in the mail. A victim doesn’t even have to see the doll to be cursed. For some reason Bakulu wanted everyone to think that it was voodoo at work.”

“But my stomach! I’m dying!” you shout. You’re drenched in sweat and pain.

“It’s in your head — just like it was in Doc’s head,” Skull says. He alternates between shaking you by the shoulders and cradling your face in his hands. “A doctor, trained to save lives, but he can’t. And he watches all those miserable people die. Doc couldn’t deal with the guilt. He ate himself up for what he thought was his failure. Don’t do the same thing to yourself.”

Your back is against the cell wall and you

slowly slide down to the floor. You want to believe Skull.

“We’re not going to die, Orion,” Skull says. “I’ll prove it to you.”

He takes something out of his pocket, bends down, and hands it to you. It’s a coupon for a free giant pizza at Pizza Demon.

“I told you. I don’t give these away on lost causes,” Skull says.

The three of you just breathe in the stale cell air for a minute. You’re not sure what you really believe. But you know you’re wasting precious time. If Bakulu’s curse doesn’t kill you, Fovera will come into the cell in 20 minutes to finish the curse.

“To tell you the truth, I’ve thought there was something phoney about this Bakulu all along,” Skull says. “He deliberately wanted people to see voodoo and to think voodoo. But it isn’t real voodoo. Even his name made me suspicious.”

“It sounds authentic to me,” Parrot says.

“It’s authentic, all right,” Skull says with a laugh. “It’s the name of a *loa*, a voodoo god. A *hungan* would never dare take the name of a voodoo god.”

“Then what’s this all about? What’s BRUTE up to?” you ask.

“If BRUTE’s got their foot in the pie, they’ve got to be after something more than athletes,” Parrot says.

“I don’t have all the answers, but I know

this: the answers are out there,” Skull says, tapping on the cell door. “How’s your stomach, Orion?”

“I don’t know. How should it be?” you ask, still confused.

“It should be just the way you *think* it should be,” Skull says, checking his watch.

“Then it’s going to be fine any minute now,” you say, straightening up.

“Good,” Parrot says, “because that’s about all the time we’ve got before Fovera comes through that door.”

“We’ll grab him when he comes in,” you say.

“It’s not likely he’ll walk in by himself. Every snake has at least two fangs,” Parrot says.

A clock ticks undeterred. And just as inevitably, the cell door begins to open slowly as the three of you move to the back wall of the cell. Then suddenly the door opens with a push.

CHAPTER

12

The three of you stare open-mouthed at the person standing in the doorway.

“SPEEDO!” you all say in unison.

“Don’t tell me they caught you, too,” Parrot says in disgust.

“Hon, don’t you know a rescue when you see one?” Speedo says. “What’s the matter with you, Orion?”

“It’s been a hard day,” you say.

“How the blue blazes did you get in here?” Parrot says.

“She showed me a secret entrance,” Speedo says, pointing to someone out of view who steps into the cell.

“Valerie!”

“Hey, Orion, how’s it going?” Valerie says with a smile. “Like, Speedo and I had a real heart-to-heart, you know? Just like on TV. And I realized I was just kidding myself. Someday BRUTE was going to waste me for rolling my eyes the wrong way.”

“We made a deal,” Speedo says.

“I led Speedo here and showed her a secret escape hatch my dad built, in case he ever had to get out of here fast,” Valerie says.

“And in exchange we’re going to take her with us and try to send her back safely to her mother, who lives in St. Paul.”

“Reunions are great, but let’s get out of here before Fovera comes back,” Parrot says, pushing people out the door.

“This place is so empty, we could practically roller-skate out of here unnoticed,” Skull says, looking around.

Speedo and Valerie lead the way through the wide, stone, crypt-quiet corridors.

“Well, the exit isn’t too far from here,” Speedo says.

“We can’t leave yet, Speedo,” you say. “Something’s going on here. It may not be voodoo, but we’ve got to find out what it is.”

“And I think we should start by searching Bakulu’s room,” Skull says.

“OK, let’s go,” Speedo says. “I’m not too comfortable hanging around in this hallway anyway. But what about Valerie?”

“I’m not leaving yet, either,” she says. “At least, like not until I see my dad. I’ve got to try one more time with him and maybe he’ll come home with me. But he’s pretty intense about BRUTE. So if, you know, if he won’t, I want to say —”

“Good-bye,” you finish the sentence.

“So nobody’s leaving?” Speedo asks with

a laugh. “You guys are tough to rescue!”

Valerie leaves to look for her father while you and the rest of the ACT team try to find Bakulu’s room. But before you’ve gotten far in the twisting hallways of the underground fortress, an alarm starts ringing. Obviously, someone is trying to find you!

You pick up the pace and finally come to a very small room with voodoo dolls and hexes on the walls. There are shrunken heads stuck on posts beside the door. The only furniture in the room is a straw mat bed and a crudely carved wood table with wooden spoons and bows. At center stage is a large wooden figure with Bakulu’s emblem carved in its chest.

“This is Bakulu’s room all right, but where is he?” Skull says.

You walk to one of the walls and push aside the grass mat covering it. Behind the mat is a thick metal wall. It has no knob, no window, no hinges. It doesn’t open.

“It’s a door,” you say, touching the wall all over. “I saw the same room design in BRUTE headquarters in Corona.”

“If we had a munitions expert on the team, we could blow it open and see what’s on the other side,” Parrot says.

Then the four of you freeze. Footsteps. BRUTE agents are very near. You stare at one another until the footsteps disappear.

“Sounds like we’d better try someplace else. We can’t bust this wall,” Parrot says.

“Step aside, hon,” Speedo says. “I’ve been saving this little trick, but you’re going to see the prettiest *POP* you ever saw.”

“You know about explosives?” you ask.

“Give me some spit and a safety pin and I can blow up anything,” Speedo says.

Much to your surprise, she quickly begins to pull off her fingernails. But they aren’t fingernails. They’re made of a puttylike substance, which she molds together and sticks on the metal wall. Then, much to your continued surprise, she really does spit on the blob on the wall and it starts to sizzle.

“Stand back a little,” she says casually.

A red spot appears where the putty is placed. It spreads out until the whole wall glows red; then the wall isn’t there anymore. You stare first at the hole and then at Speedo.

“That’s not in the catalogue,” you say.

“I made it myself,” she says. “A woman’s got to have her hobbies.”

Parrot taps Skull, Speedo, and you on the shoulder and motions to follow him down the dark hallway behind the wall.

“Why does Bakulu have a hidden passageway in his room?” you ask. “What does he have to hide from BRUTE?”

The passageway is dark and seems to extend endlessly beyond the short beam of Speedo’s flashlight. But then the flashlight beam catches a large white object not far in front of you. It suddenly lights up as you come closer.

It's a small electric car. The four of you hop on, and the car takes you zipping toward the far end of the hallway. But toward what? Bakulu's open arms? BRUTE agents? The inescapable bayous and swamp outside?

The ride ends a long way from Bakulu's room, outside another underground chamber — a modern laboratory filled with scientific equipment and the most advanced computer you've ever seen in your life.

“Whoever built this, as Parrot would say, knows how to play hardball with the big boys,” you say, letting out a whistle.

“Spare us your impersonations,” Parrot says. “Just figure out what the thing does. And hurry. We could have unexpected guests dropping by any minute.”

You can't help it, but a smile comes over your face as you begin to work with the giant computer. This is your ball park. A computer is a computer is a computer. They're remarkably open and accommodating if you know how to talk to them.

“Where'd the smile go? Did it just beat you at Turbo?” Speedo jokes. But she's watching your face intently.

“No — I just figured out what this thing does,” you say, moving your chair back away from the computer. “Skull, hold on for a surprise. Bakulu *can* put a curse on anyone he wants, all right. But this computer is the source and power of his voodoo magic.”

CHAPTER

13

For a while you won't answer any of the questions Parrot, Speedo, and Skull are machine-gunning at you. You walk around Bakulu's lab, checking things out and asking the giant computer for explanations for what you're finding.

The computer is still open and accommodating with its answers. It will tell you anything you ask. But now there is something sinister in its openness. It seems to be revealing its secrets because it knows it is stronger than you are.

“Here's what's going on,” you say. “Forget about voodoo. Everything — this whole voodoo business — is all a hoax. The real power is chemicals. And the individualized computer-generated formula is based on human voice graphs.”

Parrot, Speedo, and Skull look at you as though there were no way you could possibly explain your last remark.

But you give it your best shot: “Bakulu feeds a recording of someone's voice into the

computer. The computer then makes a voice graph of that person's voice and analyzes the person's physical and mental structure from the graph. Finally the computer creates a special formula that can upset the chemical balance of the person any way Bakulu wants. Look, I'll show you.'

You call up different names on the computer — including the jockey who became allergic to his horse. Moses Caulfield's name is in there, too. And the computer shows you their voice graphs and the formula that made them act weird.

"There are no spells. It's not voodoo," Speedo says.

"No, it's a chemical. And from what I can tell, Bakulu or someone working for him can simply touch the victim's skin with the chemical to start the effect," you say.

"Okay, that's yesterday's news. What's Bakulu going to do next? He's threatened to get to the American World Amateur Games team. How's he going to do it?" Parrot asks.

Once again you busy yourself at the computer's keyboard. But it gives you an answer you aren't ready for.

"I can't find voice graphs of the American team anywhere in the computer's memory," you say. "The next target on the list . . . oh no. The next target is me," you say. A lump begins to form in your throat.

The celebration smile slips off Parrot's face.

"I don't get it. When did he get my voice?" you say, asking the computer to call up the tape recording Bakulu used to create your voice graph.

The machine starts playing back a conversation that is all too familiar to you.

"Don't touch that!" you are saying.

"Why? It's just a new Jogman cassette player, isn't it?" Larry Qualen asks innocently.

"Larry, listen to me carefully," you say. *"Sure, it's just a cassette player, but this one is special. I earned every penny of it myself. And I paid retail — no discount!"*

"Who is that other voice?" Skull asks.

"His voice was so much louder than yours that he must have had the microphone planted on him," Parrot adds in his usual excited way of stating the obvious.

"Qualen — an agent!" you mutter to yourself. So that's it — a BRUTE agent passing himself off as one of your good friends. Larry hasn't been spending so much time with you because you remind him of his older brother who's off at college. He's been *assigned* to keep an eye on you.

"Uh, let's just call him a little unfinished business I have with BRUTE," you say out loud.

There isn't time to plan what to do about

Larry Qualen now. One thing's for sure: He'll be around when you're finished here. But you've got to put Bakulu out of business first.

Inside the computer's memory are voice graphs for Skull and Parrot, too. Bakulu obviously intends to fix up a batch of his chemicals for all of you.

“Well, cash rabbits! We'll beat him at his own game,” Parrot says with a new smile. “We'll change our voice graphs. Then we'll just laugh when he tries to give us the chemical.”

“It's worth a shot,” Speedo says.

“Okay. I think I can write a program that will change our voice graphs,” you say. “At least I can try.”

Input the following program and run it. Lines 180 and 960 must be typed as one line. Type RETURN when prompted to see all the graphs. Can you figure out a way to change the voice graphs? List the program and make the changes. If you need help, see page 123 of the Reference Manual.

PROGRAM 5

```
100 REM VOICE
110 GOSUB 960:GOSUB 970
120 READ V
130 SF=100/(SW-1)
140 FOR K=1 TO V
150 GOSUB 900
```

```

160 READ N$:PRINT N$
170 FOR Y=2 TO 14
180 READ VP:VP=INT(VP/SF):IF VP>SW
    THEN VP=SW
190 VT=Y:HT=1:GOSUB 910
200 FOR J=1 TO VP
210 PRINT "=";
220 NEXT J
230 NEXT Y
240 PRINT
250 PRINT "PRESS RETURN";:INPUT A$
260 NEXT K
270 END
280 DATA 3
290 DATA ORION
300 DATA 10,14,13,19,35,69,23,22
310 DATA 17,19,29,39,24
320 DATA SKULL
330 DATA 15,19,11,29,2,39,49,59
340 DATA 68,77,50,23,55
350 DATA PARROT
360 DATA 35,47,59,78,91,55,34,22
370 DATA 10,19,10,4,8
900 HOME:RETURN
910 VTAB(VT):HTAB(HT):RETURN
930 RD=INT(RND(1)*RX)+1:RETURN
960 NU$=CHR$(0):SW=40:SH=24
    :KZ=-16384:KW=-16368:RETURN
970 RETURN

```

This program will run as is on the Apple II+ and IIe. See page 122 for modifications for other micros.

After you've changed the computer programming so Bakulu's formula will not work as he planned, you start copying data files from Bakulu's computer onto yours. The information he's got in there is incredible — a directory of BRUTE's U.S. contacts, the keys to hundreds of BRUTE and ACT codes, blueprints of BRUTE's secret headquarters, and a map of the surrounding areas.

"I wish Doc were here," Skull says as you work. "I think it would have done him a lot of good to know this guy's a fake."

For a moment, Skull, Parrot, and Speedo are lost in their own thoughts, and you're busy with Bakulu's computer — too busy to notice that someone has entered the lab. When the four of you look toward the doorway, you're surprised to see a tall man wearing blue jeans, a pink knit shirt with an alligator on it, Topsiders on his feet, and a Mets cap on his head.

He smiles and points a revolver at you. The revolver sparkles in the light and his smile sparkles gold. You can't believe you're looking at Bakulu.

Bakulu pushes a button and the laboratory exit is sealed off. Once the electric lock is engaged, he tucks the revolver in his pants.

"You turkeys certainly know how to ruin someone's party, don't you?" Bakulu says. "Have you figured out my secret yet?"

What goes on here? Perfect English??

“Let me introduce myself,” he says again. His voice is calm, deep, and friendly. “You look intelligent and, believe me, that’s a refreshing change around here. My name is Dr. Robert LaPortere, a.k.a. Bakulu.”

“Doctor of what? Hoaxes?” Skull snaps.

“Computer sciences, M.I.T.; chemistry, University of Chicago; criminology, John Jay College,” he says. “When you put them all together, it means that I am the only man in the world capable of building a computer that can actually discover people’s potential weaknesses based upon their unique voice and speech patterns. And thanks to my brilliance on biochemical research, I can then control their weaknesses in any way I see fit. In short, ain’t I something else?” His laugh echoes through the large room until it sounds like the room is laughing back.

“That much the kid figured out, hon,” Speedo says, trying to put a pin in LaPortere’s ballooned ego.

“What we haven’t figured out is why the voodoo disguise,” you say.

“Let’s imagine a different scenario, then,” LaPortere says. “Let’s imagine that I came to BRUTE and said I had discovered a chemical that can make people do what I want them to do. What do you think would happen?”

“They’d take the chemical away from you,” you say.

“And stuff me down the nearest dis-

posal, right?" he says, nodding his head in sync with your head nodding. "I like you, kid. So you see, I needed a way of becoming indispensable to them. So I dug back to my roots for inspiration. As a matter of fact, I was born not too far from here. Now I admit I know as much about voodoo as I know about training fleas. But I know the power voodoo has on weak minds. *Voila!* the birth of Bakulu."

"And BRUTE bought the voodoo baloney?" Parrot says.

"The bozos ate it up," LaPortere says with another booming laugh.

He talks on and on. Obviously it has been a long time since he could speak his thoughts freely to someone.

"I showed up with my assistants — Grendle, an old swamp-witch who really does believe I am the most powerful wizard in the world, and Shorty, a thug I hired in Youngstown, Ohio. And, frankly, just looking at us scared the pants off BRUTE. But when they saw my test demonstrations on the sports stars, even Fovera was ready to roll over and beg for my help."

"That's because they're idiots," Parrot says.

"Yes, I agree. But remember," LaPortere says, "just by planting a few voodoo charms and dolls here and there at the scene of the crime, I persuaded ACT to believe in this superstitious nonsense, too. Oh, if it weren't so

funny it would almost be sad.”

“But why didn’t you kill us when you had the chance?” you ask.

“My allegiances are very pragmatic,” he says. “I decided it would be better to let you and BRUTE fight it out first before I chose which side to be on. And look at you. Rescued by one of your own agents right under Fovera’s nose. Very impressive . . . but not impressive enough.”

“Will you stop talking in riddles!” Parrot says through clenched teeth.

“BRUTE has already begun its master plan. The ride is over. They’ve snatched the gold ring,” LaPortere says.

He draws his gun again. “I’ve enjoyed this little chat. I get so bored with the ‘Bakulu grateful — Bakulu angry — Bakulu need more money’ routine. Sometimes it’s like living in a bad jungle movie. But we’ve got work to do today and you’d only be in the way.”

“Yes, we know. You’re planning to assassinate the Soviet premier at the World Amateur Games, aren’t you?” Parrot says.

From the way Skull and Speedo look, you can tell they’re as surprised as you are by Parrot’s inside information.

But LaPortere just laughs. “As usual, you’re thinking too small,” he says.

He carefully inches over to the computer and inputs the information he needs. Then he

quickly mixes chemicals to the computer's specifications.

"I don't think this will hurt," he says.
"I do know it will be over soon."

Then, with the revolver pointing at your forehead, he puts two drops of the computer's formula in your ear.

"A very Shakespearean death," he says.
"Like Hamlet's father."

He does the same to Skull, Speedo, and Parrot and then he motions you toward a door at the opposite end of the room. At the push of a button, the door slides open on the dark, murky bayou swamp.

He motions you into a small motorboat, which he steers through the thick and tangled swamp. Just when you absolutely don't know where you are or how far from BRUTE's secret headquarters building, LaPortere lets you out on a small, soft island in the middle of all the swamp goo.

"You are worthy opponents, but now there's nothing you can do to beat us. Go die in peace," he says, speeding away from you.

CHAPTER

14

In the last 15 minutes, your world has gotten a lot smaller. Now it consists of a small spot of sand, the only spot of sand that's above the thick, green-brown swamp water that stretches much farther than you can see. In addition, a strange chemical formula is mixing with the chemical structure of your body and mind, and you have no idea what its effects will be. It doesn't seem like a just reward for your hard work and a job well done. It doesn't seem fair.

"Nobody said the world was fair, hon," Speedo says to you.

"Are you reading my mind?" you ask.

"No, your face," she says. "Look on the bright side, Orion. Since you messed up our voice graphs in LaPortere's computer, his handy-dandy formula probably won't kill us. That improves our chances of getting out of this swamp alive by at least half, don'tcha think?"

She's right. You do feel symptom-free and it has been long enough since LaPortere put the formula in your ear.

Just then Parrot starts clucking like a chicken and scratching at the ground with his feet.

For a minute or two, you and Speedo and Skull just stare at him. He wouldn't be the first agent to crack during this mission. But finally it dawns on you: Parrot hasn't gone nuts. This is how his mind is reacting to the chemical that LaPortere created from Parrot's messed-up voice graph.

"What are we going to do with him?" you ask, catching your breath between your laughter. "Send him to the booby-hatch?"

"We can't do that," Skull says, laughing just as hard. "We need the eggs!!"

The three of you roll laughing in the swampy sand, while Parrot scratches in it and clucks away.

"Shh!" you say. "I saw something move out there."

"Alligators and snakes — this is a swamp, hon," Speedo says.

"Get him quiet somehow. Something's out there," you say again.

Speedo tries to muffle your mission leader hen, but he struggles all the way.

Something *is* moving in the swamp. You hear a sound that *isn't* the burps of frogs and screeches of crickets. It's something paddling in the water.

"Who's out there?" you shout. "Who's there?"

“Like you guys must have taken a wrong turn, fer sure,” says the welcome voice of Valerie.

Speedo lets Parrot go and his chicken noise serves as a beacon as Valerie paddles up slowly in a rotting, moss-covered rowboat. She is just as surprised and glad to see you as you are to see her again.

While you try to get Parrot into the boat — something seems to have ruffled his feathers and he’s resisting — Valerie tells you that while she was talking to her father, there was a BRUTE “scramble” alert. The whole place emptied in five minutes . . . and he chose to go with them. She slipped out the secret entrance and got back into the boat she and Speedo had hidden. Speedo takes over paddling.

“Is *he* going to be all right?” Valerie asks, pointing to Parrot.

“He thinks the sky is falling,” you joke, and Parrot tries to take a peck at you.

Maybe it is. Dark clouds begin filling the sky above you as if they were being painted with a roller.

“OK, so BRUTE isn’t going to work its voodoo on the American sports team. That’s great. But where are they going now?” Speedo asks.

“Iowa,” Valerie says. “My dad says they’re going to Iowa — some town called Daphne.”

Parrot goes crazy at the word.

“What’s wrong with him?” Skull asks.

“Iowa must excite him. It’s all that corn,”

Speedo says with a laugh.

But Parrot keeps nudging and pecking at you. He is trying to tell you something, but you don’t know what it is.

“We’re going to get very wet in a few minutes, guys,” Speedo says. “I hope this old boat can take it.”

“What’s going on in Iowa?” Skull says, ignoring the dark clouds for what he hopes is a silver lining. But the rain starts beating down.

“I don’t know. But if LaPortere and Fovera are heading there, it’s got to be something big,” you say.

“We’ve got to get there in a hurry!” Skull adds.

“We’ve got to get out of here, first, hon,” Speedo shouts. And rainstorm or no rainstorm, she starts to row the boat again, but Valerie pulls the paddle out of her hands.

“Like stop it!” she shouts. “You’ll blow us all up!”

CHAPTER

15

“Like I almost forgot to tell you — wow, silly me, you know,” Valerie shouts at Speedo so she can be heard above the downpour. “It’s not safe to move an inch, man. There are mines and depth charges in this water.”

As Valerie finishes her sentence, a bolt of lightning streaks down and smashes into a swamp tree. There are sparks, a quick explosion, and then the tree topples over, almost crashing onto your boat.

It’s not safe to stick around there, either. What’s your next move? It’s a pretty basic question, and you come up with a pretty BASIC solution.

“Wait! Maybe I can do something,” you say, your fingers flying over the keyboard of your computer. “I copied a lot of stuff from Bakulu’s computer. Maybe I’ve got a map of this obstacle course.” A few commands and BINGO! You’re thrilled. Something is finally going right! “I’ve got the map. I should be able to plot out a safe course for us on the computer.”

But this is not a mission where anything is going to be that simple. The rain and lightning from the storm are playing all kinds of games with your computer. The readouts on your screen keep blinking on and off. Even with the map, plotting a safe course will be part skill and part guessing game.

Input the following program and run it. Lines 290, 300, 330, 340, 350, 370, 380, 390, 420, 940, 950, and 960 must each be typed as one line.

PROGRAM 6

```
100 REM MINES
110 DIM MH(80),MV(80)
120 GOSUB 900:GOSUB 960:GOSUB 970
130 NM=2*SW:ZH=3
140 HT=SW-1
150 FOR VT=SH-1 TO SH-4 STEP -1
160 GOSUB 910:PRINT "/":NEXT VT
170 FOR I=1 TO NM
180 RX=SW-2:GOSUB 930:MH(I)=RD+1
190 RX=SH-3:GOSUB 930:MV(I)=RD+1
200 NEXT I
210 FOR I=1 TO NM
220 VT=MV(I):HT=MH(I):GOSUB 910
230 PRINT "*";
240 NEXT I
250 PV=1:PH=1
260 NV=PV:NH=PH
270 VT=PV:HT=PH:GOSUB 910
```

```

28Ø PRINT "A";:GOSUB 39Ø
29Ø NH=PH+1:IF (PH>SW-1)*(PV>SH-5)
THEN 47Ø
30Ø IF (PH>SW-1)+(PV<1)+(PV>SH)
THEN GOSUB 91Ø: PRINT " ";
:GOTO 25Ø
31Ø GOSUB 94Ø
32Ø IF KY$=NU$ THEN 36Ø
33Ø IF (KY$<>"U")*(KY$<>"D")
THEN 36Ø
34Ø IF KY$="D" THEN NV=PV+1
:IF NV>SH THEN NV=SH
35Ø IF KY$="U" THEN NV=NV-1
:IF NV<1 THEN NV=1
36Ø IF DZ THEN DZ=Ø:GOTO 38Ø
37Ø VT=PV:HT=PH:GOSUB 91Ø
:PRINT " ";
38Ø PV=NV:PH=NH:GOSUB 91Ø
:GOTO 27Ø
39Ø FOR I=1 TO NM:IF MV(I)<>PV
THEN 45Ø
40Ø IF MH(I)<>PH THEN 45Ø
41Ø Z=Z+1:IF Z>ZH THEN 43Ø
42Ø GOSUB 91Ø:PRINT "+":DZ=1
:GOTO 46Ø
43Ø GOSUB 9ØØ:PRINT "***BOOM***"
44Ø END
45Ø NEXT I
46Ø RETURN
47Ø GOSUB 9ØØ:PRINT "YOU MADE IT!"
48Ø END
9ØØ HOME:RETURN
91Ø VTAB(VT):HTAB(HT):RETURN
93Ø RD=INT(RND(1)*RX)+1:RETURN

```



```

94Ø KY$=NU$:KY=PEEK(KZ)
      :IF KY<128 THEN RETURN
95Ø KY$=CHR$(KY-128):POKE KW,Ø
      :RETURN
96Ø NU$=CHR$(Ø):SW=4Ø:SH=24
      :KZ=-16384:KW=-16368:RETURN
97Ø RETURN

```

You must steer your boat past the mines by using the "U" key for up and the "D" for down. The current will carry the boat forward (to the right of the screen). You must steer from the upper-left position to the gate at the lower right. Good luck — our ship can withstand only five hits from the mines (the asterisks).

This program will run as is on the Apple II+ and IIe. Check page 123 of the Reference Manual for changes for other computers.

You're drenched; the rain is beating on you full strength. It's like going through a car wash in an open convertible, but slowly you've twisted your way through the swamp, avoiding its mines and depth charges. Finally you reach solid, although wet and sloppy, land. Your first stop is the dry shelter of the trunk of a large, dead, hollow tree. When the heavy rain slows, you leave the tree and head for the first road you can find.

After so much hiding and taking every kind of back trail, it feels strange and dangerous to be so conspicuous. But now you want to be found in a hurry — by ACT.

It doesn't take them very long to trace your computer's homing signal. An hour after you engage it, a squad of helicopters swoops down on the old two-lane highway you've been walking along.

One helicopter quickly carries Parrot away to medical facilities. Another takes Valerie to ACT headquarters. After her debriefing she'll be able to go live with her mother. The mission is over for Skull, too. He can go back to being the Pizza Demon, since Bakulu turned out to be a fraud.

But you and Speedo are on your way to Iowa! The briefing was short and dramatic. You found out that there is a top-secret military base in Daphne, Iowa. Your information and ACT's intelligence on the subject all lead to one unmistakable conclusion — BRUTE and the phoney Bakulu have heard about the base and the brand-new missiles housed there. They're going to use Bakulu's "magic" to hijack the missiles! And you have got to stop them!

There isn't even time to contact ACT headquarters, you are told, because *they'd* have to contact the Army, and the Army would have to contact the President and. . . . By the time you got the proper clearances, most of Iowa would be blown to the moon. This was ACT's job in the first place — and ACT will have to finish it. Alone.

"Hop out, fly-boy," Speedo says to the pilot in the last helicopter. "I'm taking over this

baby. Sorry — but you don't have enough security clearance for where we're going."

Within minutes you and Speedo are headed for a secret airstrip where you can trade in the helicopter for a jet. Then it's on, quickly, to the small but dangerous dot on the map called Daphne, Iowa.

As the jet flies northwest, there's a lot that you and Speedo could say to each other. This mission is ending up just the way it started — the two of you together. Or you could go over everything you know about LaPortere, prepare a personality profile to try to find *his* weakness. Or you could wonder how Parrot is doing.

But you don't say anything to each other. You've been through enough together to know that now's the time to save your breath and store your energy.

A radio report from ACT intelligence confirms that communication with the secret missile base in Daphne has been interrupted. That can only mean one thing — BRUTE and LaPortere are *in*. Score one for their team.

You can picture the sequence of events in your tired mind. BRUTE agents, secretly infiltrating the base, maybe even weeks ago, gathering voice prints . . . later one by one applying the "voodoo" potion to key security people. They're helpless after a couple of minutes. LaPortere and Fovera, with only a few BRUTE agents for protection, are the last to arrive — after all the Army and supporting ACT

personnel have been turned into zombies. They walk into the base like kings. LaPortere wears the headdress and the loose-flowing clothes he hates, but which look so right on him. How can a man as smart as LaPortere go so wrong?

Questions like that don't really matter now. The fact is, LaPortere and BRUTE are inside the base, sitting there with a finger on the button of the most destructive guided missiles ever created.

CHAPTER

16

Speedo brings the small jet down for a smooth landing at Daphne's airport. Immediately, you start to contact ACT headquarters to arrange for a car so you can drive to the secret missile base.

"Forget it!" Speedo says, grabbing the radio out of your hands and yanking the cord off the microphone. "I've had it with ACT's cars."

She races out of the jet, pulling you along to the car rental booth in the airport. She rents a two-seater with a big turbo engine. "At last," she screams, turning the ignition key. "A car with pipes!!"

She practically has to scrape you off the seat back when you arrive at the missile base.

Even though you thought you knew what you'd find in Daphne, you're not ready for it. The guard at the front gate, a young soldier not much older than you, is slumped on the ground, paralyzed from the neck down.

"I couldn't believe it," he says, as you prop him up in the shade. "All they did was

touch my hand, and suddenly I couldn't move. There were three of them. Some guy wearing a black uniform, a guy dressed up like a witch doctor or something, and a short guy. They're still in there.'

You leave the soldier and head for the cinder-block building in front of you. But when you're almost at the front door, an alarm goes off — a horn blasting on and off every five seconds.

"What does that mean?" you say, running back to the guard.

"It means a missile is set to launch," the guard says. "It'll start pulsing faster the closer it is to lift-off."

You race back into the building and zero in on the launch control room, which is 50 feet below ground.

When the elevator door opens, you see a short man lying on the floor. There are so many medals and ribbons on his chest that he probably can't come within 50 feet of a metal detector.

"Who the devil are you?" he barks.

He's Colonel Michael Koarn, the missile base commander. His tone of voice doesn't change much after you show him your ACT identification. But that's okay — you're used to this kind of cold cooperation from the Army. They don't like outsiders to help them solve their problems.

But Colonel Koarn isn't like that. He just

knows that in this case, there isn't a single second to spare on nonessentials — and thanks to Bakulu's "magic," he is unable to move his legs.

You lift Colonel Koarn into a chair and he quickly begins to explain that there's only one way to prevent the launch.

"It's in the computer system," Colonel Koarn says. "It gives you a chance to abort. The system flashes a series of letters. To shut down the missile, you must re-enter those letters in reverse order. But here's the catch — the system will give you only three seconds to do it, and you cannot make a mistake!"

"Three seconds?" you say. "What happens if I'm not fast enough?"

"It's our fail-safe feature," Koarn says, apologetically. "See, we were trying to make sure that the enemy couldn't bust in here and abort a launch. I guess it never occurred to us that the enemy would launch the missile and *we'd* want to abort the thing!"

"Just tell me what happens if I'm not fast enough," you repeat.

"If you're too slow with the shutdown code, the missile will detonate while it's standing right there in its silo," the colonel replies.

"I think he means you can kiss the senior prom good-bye, Orion," Speedo adds.

"I get the message," you say.

"Don't worry. This kid can do anything,

Captain,” Speedo says, giving the colonel a friendly shot in the ribs with her elbow.

The Colonel doesn’t seem to appreciate the elbow or being called “Captain.”

The alarm signal has picked up a little speed. Inside your chest, your alarm signal — your heart — jumps its tempo, too.

How fast can you enter a code? you think to yourself as you and Speedo rush through doors and security gates to the launch control room.

“Great news. The control-room door is locked. I’ll have to blow it,” Speedo says, removing several fingernails and applying them to the door. “I love doing this.”

“Wait,” you say.

“Hon, we don’t have time to take a number and wait our turn,” she says, turning to face you. “Orion!! What are you doing??!!”

You can tell without looking up that Speedo thinks your brain has turned to swamp mud because you’re “playing” with your computer.

“This will only take a minute,” you say.

“Take your time,” she says. “We’re not going anywhere — except to kingdom come if that missile launches.”

“Speedo, you heard Colonel Koarn. I’ve got only one real chance to enter the code correctly. So I’ve written a simulation program so I can practice.”

Input the following program and run it. Lines 320, 330, 940, 950, and 960 should each be typed as one line. Try the program several times. Try to improve your speed and accuracy. Remember, type the letters in reverse order!

PROGRAM 7

```
100 REM TYPO
110 GOSUB 900:GOSUB 960:GOSUB 970
120 AA=ASC("A")-1:Z=ASC("Z")-1
130 LN=10
140 FOR I=1 TO LN
150 RX=36:GOSUB 930
160 IF RD<27 THEN C=RD+AA
170 IF RD>26 THEN C=RD+Z
180 S(I)=C
190 NEXT I
200 VT=3:HT=1:GOSUB 910
210 FOR I=1 TO LN
220 PRINT CHR$(S(I));
230 NEXT I
240 VT=5:HT=1:GOSUB 910
250 FOR I=LN TO 1 STEP -1
260 TM=TM+1
270 GOSUB 940:IF KY$=NU$ THEN 260
280 IF KY$="." THEN END
290 IF ASC(KY$)<>S(I)THEN 330
300 PRINT KY$;
310 NEXT I
320 GOSUB 900:PRINT "GOT IT IN ";
INT(TM*(1000/CK));" UNITS."
:TM=0:GOTO 140
```

```

330 GOSUB 900:PRINT "YOU MISSED"
      :TM=1:GOTO 140
900 HOME:RETURN
910 VTAB(VT):HTAB(HT):RETURN
930 RD=INT(RND(1)*RX)+1:RETURN
940 KY$=NU$:KY=PEEK(KZ):IF KY<128
      THEN RETURN
950 KY$=CHR$(KY-128):POKE KW,0
      :RETURN
960 NU$=CHR$(0):SW=40:SH=24
      :KZ=-16384:KW=-16368:GOSUB 970
      :RETURN
970 CK=200:RETURN

```

This program will run as is on the Apple II+ and IIe. See page 125 of the Reference Manual for changes for other systems.

You try over and over, your speed and accuracy improving gradually. But the launch alarm is blasting every five seconds now. You can't wait any longer. It's time for your final exam.

"Blow the door, Speedo," you say.

In seconds, the locked door to the launch control room begins to dissolve in a red blur. You rush into the room and almost run right into Fovera, LaPortere, and Mr. Short-and-Homely. LaPortere is shocked to see you, but Fovera smiles with almost childlike delight.

"Now I know what you guys must be thinking," Speedo says. "Why are we still

alive? And why didn't we phone before dropping in?"

"You're too late. The missile is aimed at Washington, D.C., and it's nearly launched. You can't stop it," Fovera says.

"Listen, that's what we wanted to talk to you about," Speedo goes on, taunting him. "I know how sensitive you are to criticism — and believe me, if I had as many character flaws as you, I'd be sensitive, too — but the truth is you didn't launch it right."

Speedo talks on and on, faster and faster, keeping time with the alarm signal which is now ringing once every three seconds. She is keeping their attention focused on her — not on *you* — as you slowly creep sideways toward the launch computer console.

"We know what we're talking about because Orion here helped build this little windup toy," Speedo says. "Take that little button over there. What do you think it does?"

The alarm is sounding every two seconds now. But all eyes and ears are on Speedo as she walks over and pushes the button she pointed to. Suddenly the lights go out.

Now's your chance to rush for the computer console . . . if you don't trip over something in the dark first.

You type ABORT and wait for the code. Something is going on in the room behind you, but you're looking only at the computer screen.

Run the program again and give it your best shot!

Your fingers fly across the keys. Fast enough? Or have you just entered your own death certificate? You hold your breath. A deep one . . . maybe your last.

The silence when the missile alarm quits almost knocks you over. It's like a force that was pushing against you and suddenly stopped.

"Orion, you did it," Speedo says.

Her voice sounds distant to you for a second as you snap out of the feeling that you were the only person in the world. She's smiling, but so are you.

"It's a shame these swamp creatures missed all the excitement, but they were getting so cranky I decided they needed a nap," Speedo says, twirling her tranquilizer gun on her finger before putting it away.

EPILOGUE

“Orion, are you with us?” the ACT coordinator asks. This is the third time she’s interrupted the debriefing at headquarters to get you back to speed.

Everyone at ACT is very happy about the way the mission has turned out. Fovera is busy for days spilling everything he knows about BRUTE in exchange for protection in prison. And he’ll have excellent company when he goes, with Dr. LaPortere and the short guy there for the rest of their lives. Someday Fovera may even get over his shock that LaPortere can speak perfect English.

ACT scientists also discover that LaPortere’s formula gradually wears off, so not only is Moses Caulfield going to get another title fight, but Parrot is no longer a chicken, either. And the soldiers at the missile base recover completely, too.

Headquarters sets up a special private phone conversation between you and Valerie — she’s home and happy living with her

mother, remembering the *good* things about her father, and trying to figure out his last heroic deed. Shortly after the ACT team flew out of Louisiana, Valerie's father blew up BRUTE's headquarters and Dr. LaPortere's computer, even though he knew there was no way he could escape the explosion.

Still, you're twitchy during the meeting, because all you can think about is some unfinished business you have back home.

When you arrive home, you're barely unpacked before you're out of the house again and heading for Larry Qualen's house.

Larry's in his backyard beside the swimming pool. Even though he tries, he can't hide how surprised he is to see you alive.

You've planned a half dozen speeches and all kinds of threats to yell at him. But seeing him sitting in a beach chair with a can of soda in his hand, acting like a normal kid, pushes you over the edge. And that's just what you decide to do. You push Larry over the edge with a flying drop-kick that launches him right into the pool.

"You can't prove anything and you know it," Larry sneers at you.

"I know it. But from now on, Larry, remember this: You're not watching me — I'm watching you." And with that you walk away, flipping one of LaPortere's voodoo dolls into the swimming pool.

REFERENCE MANUAL

Note to user: The programming activities in this book have been designed for use with the BASIC programming language on the IBM PC and PCjr, Apple II+ or Apple IIe (with Applesoft BASIC), Commodore 64, Vic-20, Atari 400/800, Radio Shack TRS-80 Level 2 or greater, and the Radio Shack Color Computer. Each machine has its own operating procedures for starting up BASIC and editing programs. So make sure you're in BASIC before trying to run any of these programs, and check your user manual for instructions on how to edit lines. Also make sure you type NEW before entering each program to clear out any leftovers from previous activities.

The version of the program included in the text will run as is on Apple. You will have to modify the programs for the other computers. All the instructions you need are in this manual.

Even if you're using a computer other than the ones mentioned, the program may still

work — since it's always written in the most generalized BASIC.

If you need help with one of the computer activities in the *Micro Adventure*, or want to understand how a program works, you'll find what you need in this manual.

Naturally, programs must be typed into your computer *exactly* as given. If the program should run on your computer but you're having problems, do a list on the program and check your typing before you try anything else. Even a misplaced comma or parenthesis might cause a syntax error that will prevent the whole program from working.

TERMS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Computer experts have a special "language" they use when talking about programs. Here are some common terms that will help you understand the explanations in this manual.

Arrays are groups of two or more logically related data elements in a program that have the same name. However, so that the individual elements in the array can be used, each is also identified by its own address (called an index by programmers). You can think of an array as an apartment building. One hundred people might live at the Northwest Apartments (or 100 pieces of information might be stored in the NW Array). But each unit within the building has a number (like Apt 14) so it

can be located and receive mail. In the NW Array, 14 could be the index to find a particular piece of information, and would be written NW (14). If you put the 26 letters of the alphabet into an array called Alpha\$, then Alpha\$(2) would equal "B" because B is the second letter of the alphabet.

ASCII (pronounced *asskee*) is the standard code used by most microcomputers to represent characters such as letters, numbers, and punctuation.

ASC is a function in BASIC that will supply a character's ASCII code. For example ASC("A") will give you the number 65.

Bugs are errors or mistakes in a program that keep it from doing what it's supposed to do. Some of the programming activities in this book will ask you to find and fix a bug in the program so that it will work correctly.

Functions are ready-made routines that perform standard calculations in a program. It's sort of like having a key on a calculator that computes a square root or percentage of a number. The programming language BASIC comes with a number of standard functions to perform certain tasks. For example, the function SQR(x) will find the square root of any number when x is replaced by that number. You might want to check the BASIC manual that came with your computer to see which

functions are available on your system.

INT is a function that changes any number that you supply into a whole number or integer. For example `INT(4.5)` will return the value 4. For numbers greater than 0, `INT` just throws away any fractions and supplies you with the whole number.

LEN is a function that tells you the number of characters in a string of letters, numbers, or other symbols. For example, if a variable string called `A$` contained “STOP” then `LEN(A$) = 4`.

Loops are sections of programs that may be performed a specified number of times or until certain conditions are met. For example, if you wanted to write a program that would count from 1 to 100, a loop could be used to keep adding 1 to a counter variable until the number 100 was reached. Loops are most commonly formed with `FOR/NEXT` statements or `GOTO` commands. You’ll find many examples of these in the programs in this book.

Random Number Generator This function, which is called `RND` in BASIC, lets you generate numbers at “random” just as though you were throwing a set of dice and didn’t know which number was going to come up next. In most home computers, the `RND` function returns a fraction between 0 and 1. To get num-

bers in a larger range, the program must multiply the fraction by a larger number. For example, `RND * 10` will produce numbers between 0 and 10.

REM This command is used to tell the computer that whatever is on a particular line is just a comment and should not be executed. An example might look like this:

```
10 REM THIS PROGRAM DOES A  
COUNTDOWN
```

Strings are groups of one or more letters, numbers, or other symbols that are treated as a unit. In the English language, a collection of letters that make up a word can be thought of as a string. In a program, the information in a string is often enclosed in quotation marks to let the computer know that the symbols are to be treated as characters. In the string "123" the program is dealing with the characters 1, 2, and 3, not the larger number 123. The computer is storing these as the ASCII values for 1, 2, and 3 which are 49, 50, and 51. A string that is empty and has no characters in it is called a null string and is represented as "".

Subroutines are parts of a program or a sequence of instructions called by a program to perform a general or frequently used task. In some of the programs in this book, subrou-

tines are used to position the cursor or get input from the screen.

Variables are names used to represent values that will change during the course of a program. For example, a variable named D\$ might represent any day of the week. It may help you to think of a variable as a storage box, waiting to receive whatever information you want to put in. Variables that deal with strings of symbols are always followed by a dollar sign. Variables that end in a percent sign always hold integers (the whole numbers like 1, 2, 3, 500). Variables with a pound sign or no special character at the end hold numbers that may contain fractions. The number of characters allowed in a variable name varies from computer to computer.

MASTER LISTS

The programs in the text are designed to run on the Apple II+ and IIe, but they will run on other computers with certain modifications. Below are Master Lists for each computer. These lines of programming customize the programs in the text for each computer. You will not need all of the lines in the Master List for each program. This Reference Manual will tell you which lines of the Master List are needed for each program.

If you can save programs on a disk or cas-

sette, you can type in the Master List for your computer, give it a name, and save it. Then when you type in a program, simply load the Master List first, then type in the program from the text. The extra lines will not hurt.

MASTER LIST FOR COMMODORE 64

```
80Ø XC$=MID$(A$,SB,SE):RETURN
82Ø A$=A$+B$:RETURN
90Ø PRINT CHR$(147);:RETURN
91Ø POKE XT,HT-1:POKE YT,VT-1:
    POKE FG,Ø:SYS PL:RETURN
92Ø FOR WS=1 TO WT:NEXT:RETURN
93Ø RD=INT(RX*RND(1)+1):RETURN
94Ø GET KY$:IF KY$="" THEN KY$=NU$
95Ø RETURN
96Ø XT=782:YT=781:FG=783:PL=6552Ø:
    SW=4Ø:SH=24:NU$=CHR$(Ø):RETURN
```

MASTER LIST FOR VIC-20

```
80Ø XC$=MID$(A$,SB,SE):RETURN
82Ø A$=A$+B$:RETURN
90Ø PRINT CHR$(147);:RETURN
91Ø POKE XT,HT-1:POKE YT,VT-1:
    POKE FG,Ø:SYS PL:RETURN
92Ø FOR WS=1 TO WT:NEXT:RETURN
93Ø RD=INT(RX*RND(1)+1):RETURN
94Ø GET KY$:IF KY$="" THEN KY$=NU$
95Ø RETURN
96Ø XT=782:YT=781:FG=783:PL=6552Ø:
    SW=22:SH=22:NU$=CHR$(Ø):RETURN
```

MASTER LIST FOR RADIO SHACK COLOR COMPUTER (REQUIRES EXTENDED BASIC)

```
800 XC$=MID$(A$,SB,SE):RETURN
820 A$=A$+B$:RETURN
900 CLS:RETURN
910 HZ=INT(HT-1+(VT-1)*32+0.5):
    PRINT @HZ,"";:RETURN
920 FOR WS=1 TO WT:NEXT:RETURN
930 RD=INT(RND(RX)):RETURN
940 KY$=INKEY$:IF KY$="" THEN
    KY$=NU$
950 RETURN
960 NU$=CHR$(0):SW=32:SH=16:RETURN
```

MASTER LIST FOR RADIO SHACK TRS-80

```
800 XC$=MID$(A$,SB,SE):RETURN
820 A$=A$+B$:RETURN
900 CLS:RETURN
910 HZ=INT(HT-1+(VT-1)*64+0.5):
    PRINT @HZ,"";:RETURN
920 FOR WS=1 TO WT:NEXT:RETURN
930 RD=INT(RND(RX)):RETURN
940 KY$=INKEY$:IF KY$="" THEN
    KY$=NU$
950 RETURN
960 NU$=CHR$(0):SW=64:SH=16:RETURN
```

MASTER LIST FOR IBM PC AND PCjr

```
800 XC$=MID$(A$,SB,SE):RETURN
820 A$=A$+B$:RETURN
900 CLS:RETURN
910 LOCATE VT,HT:RETURN
920 FOR WS=1 TO WT:NEXT:RETURN
```

```

93Ø RD=INT(RX*RND(1)+1):RETURN
94Ø KY$=INKEY$:IF KY$="" THEN
    KY$=NU$
95Ø RETURN
96Ø SW=4Ø:SH=24:NU$=CHR$(Ø):RETURN

```

MASTER LIST FOR ATARI

```

8ØØ XC$=A$(SB,SB+SE-1):RETURN
82Ø A$(LEN(A$)+1)=B$:RETURN
9ØØ PRINT CHR$(125);:RETURN
91Ø POSITION HT+1,VT-1:RETURN
92Ø FOR WS=1 TO WT:NEXT WS:RETURN
93Ø RD=INT(RND(Ø)*RX+1):RETURN
94Ø K=PEEK(KZ):IF K=255 THEN
    KY$=NU$:RETURN
95Ø GET #1,KW:KY$=CHR$(KW):
    POKE 764,255:RETURN
96Ø NU$=CHR$(Ø):SW=37:SH=24:
    KZ=764:KW=Ø:OPEN #1,4,4,"K:"
    :RETURN

```

PROGRAM 1: DECODER

Modifications for Other Micros

For all computers except the Apple II+ and IIe, use line 900 from the Master List for your computer.

Also make these changes on the following computers:

Atari:

```

1Ø5 DIM A$(8Ø),MG$(8Ø),MX$(26)
    PW$(15),XC$(1)

```

TRS-80 and Color Computer:

105 CLEAR 2000

What the Program Does

This program will decode your secret messages from ACT, but you must know the password!

How the Program Works

At line 110 we clear the screen and then read in a mixed-up alphabet from a DATA statement. You'll see what we do with it later. Next we get a password (PW\$). Finally, the program asks you for the secret message, in line 160. If the message is just "STOP" then the program ends. Otherwise, some tricky things go on!

At line 190 we begin processing each and every letter of the message, which is in MG\$. Each letter is reduced to a value from 0 to 25. A is 0, B is 1, and so on up to Z, which is 25. At line 230, the variable L is incremented. L is used to count our way through the letters of the password. When L reaches the length of the password, it is reset to 1. Lines 240 and 250 extract the Lth letter of the password, and change it to a number from 1 to 26, so that an A becomes 1, a B becomes 2, and on to Z, which is 26. Line 260 adds the values of the letter from the message to the value of the letter from the password, and makes a new number between 1 and 26. That

number is stored in the variable X. X is the number that is used to "index" into the mixed alphabet. If X is 1, then we use the first letter of the mixed alphabet; if X is 3, we use the third letter of the mixed alphabet, and so forth. This is the letter that is printed as the DEcode of ACT's message.

PROGRAM 2: FLY PLANE

Modifications for Other Micros

For all computers except the Apple II+ and Apple IIe, use lines 900, 910, 930, and 960 from the Master List for your computer.

Also make these changes on the following computers:

Atari:

```
105 DIM NU$(1)
970 RETURN
```

IBM PC and PCjr:

```
970 RANDOMIZE(VAL(RIGHT$(TIME$,2)))
:RETURN
```

Commodore 64 and VIC-20:

```
970 RD=RND(-TI):RETURN
```

TRS-80 and Color Computer:

```
105 CLEAR 2000
970 RETURN
```

What the Program Does

In Fly Plane, you try to fly and land a plane safely. Your plane is shown as a “>” in the upper left of the screen. You must try to land it on the “X” at the lower-right corner of the screen. You may fly as fast as you want, and descend as fast as you want until the move when you land. If you try to land at too fast a speed or too sharp a descent, then you will crash. Be sure not to fly off the edge of the screen. You will run out of sky. Here are a couple of hints: Try speeds of 150 to 400 and descents of 1 to 10. Good luck, pilot!

How the Program Works

After clearing the screen and getting the screen height and width, the program sets some variables. These are: RM is the right margin, or side, of the screen; BM is the bottom margin; LP is the landing position. PV is the plane’s vertical position, and PH is the plane’s horizontal position. NV and NH are the new vertical and the new horizontal positions of the plane after a move is calculated. HW is the speed of the headwind.

At line 150 we set the plane’s position to the new plane’s newest position. A space is printed at the last position to “erase” the plane from its previous spot. At line 180, the “>” is redrawn at the new position. From line 200 to line 240, we reposition ourselves at the

bottom of the screen to get information from you, the pilot. You are told the speed of the headwind. You enter the speed of the plane and the descent factor. Line 250 uses this information to calculate the new position of the plane.

By the way, if you look closely at line 260 you may be able to figure out the maximum speed (SP) and descent (DC) at which you are allowed to land safely.

PROGRAM 3: RADIO TRANSMIT

Modifications for Other Micros

For all computers except the Apple II+ and Apple IIe, use lines 900, 910, 920, 930, 940, 950, and 960 from the Master List for your computer.

Also make these changes on the following computers:

Atari:

```
105 DIM C$(1),H(9),KY$(1),L1$(15),  
    L2$(15),NU$(1),V(10)  
970 WU=10:RETURN
```

IBM PC and PCjr:

```
970 RANDOMIZE(VAL(RIGHT$(TIME$,2)))  
    :WU=12:RETURN
```

Commodore 64 and VIC-20:

```
970 RD=RND(-TI):WU=8:RETURN
```

TRS-80 and Color Computer:

```
105 CLEAR 2000  
970 WU=10:RETURN
```

What the Program Does

Trying to catch the bad guys' radio transmissions is a difficult task. Luckily you have your computer to help you. This program will show you the characters coming from nine separate transmitters. You may test each one individually. If there is nothing of particular interest going on, then you will be informed of such. Of course, you may find something evil going on. If you do, try to figure out what the transmissions say. To operate the program, press a number from 1 to 9. Keep trying different numbers until you find the illegal transmitter. The squares are numbered like this:

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

How the Program Works

Lines 270 to 420 are the main loop of the program. At line 270, we choose a box. We test to see if it is the illegal transmitter at line 280. If it is, we increment our letter counter and set the message character to the next letter of the BRUTE message. If it is a normal activity box, we just get a random letter at line

320. The character is printed in the center of the appropriate box at lines 330 to 340. Next we wait for a bit to see if there has been a number typed from the keyboard. If a key has been pressed, we check to see if it is the number of the BRUTE transmission box or not.

PROGRAM 4: VODOO STONES

Modifications for Other Micros

For all computers except the Apple II+ and IIe, use line 900 from the Master List for your computer.

What the Program Does

Voodoo Stones is a very unusual game. It is a bit like NIM, where you lose if you take the last stone, but the rules are different. In Voodoo Stones, the gamemaster “hears double.” No matter what number you give him, he will always take you to mean double what you said. No fractions allowed. After you play, the gamemaster will always take one and only one stone away.

How the Program Works

The mechanics of this game are straightforward. You choose a number of stones to begin the game with. The gamemaster doubles it, and takes one away. You select the number of stones to take in line 210 and it is doubled and taken away in line 240. Line 280 tests

whether you got the last stone or not. If you didn't, the program loops back to line 170 and the gamemaster takes a single stone away again.

Here are some questions for you to try to answer (they are also hints!): Is there a trick involved in this game? Think about odd numbers and even numbers. What happens when you double an even number? How about an odd number? What happens if you take one away from any even number? Is one an odd number? Is there any way to win this game?

PROGRAM 5: VOICE GRAPHS

Modifications for Other Micros

For all computers except the Apple II+ and IIe, use lines 900, 910, 930, and 960 from the Master List for your computer.

Also make these changes on the following computers:

Atari:

```
105 DIM A$(5),N$(15),NU$(1)
970 RETURN
```

IBM PC and PCjr:

```
970 RANDOMIZE(VAL(RIGHT$(TIME$,2)))
:RETURN
```

Commodore 64 and VIC-20:

```
970 RD=RND(-TI):RETURN
```

TRS-80 and Color Computer:

105 CLEAR 2000

970 RETURN

What the Program Does

Voice Graphs lets you see the “voice-prints” of Orion, Parrot, and Skull. The program makes a graph of horizontal bars. Each bar represents a frequency present in the speaker’s voice. The data for the bar graphs was taken earlier.

How the Program Works

The DATA is put into this program with DATA statements. You can change the graph by changing the numbers in the DATA statements. Keep the numbers between 1 and 100. They will automatically scale to your screen size.

You can add voices to this program. Just add numbers in more DATA statements. Each voice uses one name followed by 13 numbers. Be sure to change the very first DATA statement in line 280 for the total number of voices for which you have data.

PROGRAM 6: MINES

Modifications for Other Micros

For all computers except the Apple II+ and IIe, use lines 900, 910, 930, 940, 950, and

960 from the Master List for your computer.

Also make these changes for the following computers:

Atari:

```
105 DIM KY$(1),NU$(1)
970 RETURN
```

IBM PC and PCjr:

```
970 RANDOMIZE(VAL(RIGHT$(TIME$,2)))
:RETURN
```

Commodore 64 and VIC-20:

```
970 RD=RND(-TI):RETURN
```

TRS-80 and Color Computer:

```
105 CLEAR 2000
970 RETURN
```

What the Program Does

You must use your computer to pilot past the underwater mines to the gateway. Your boat can withstand several hits, but too many and it's "Good-bye ACT!" There is a strong underwater current that will drive your ship forward, but you must steer past the mines by using the "U" (UP) and "D" (DOWN) keys. You must steer your boat from its position in the upper-left corner to the gate at the lower-right corner. If you miss the gate, you will have to start from the top again. Good luck! The mines appear as asterisks on your screen — don't hit them!

How the Program Works

Line 270 begins the main program loop. Starting there, we put the cursor to the boat's current position, and write an "A" there. Then there is a GOSUB to line 390. That is when we check to see if we have hit any of the mines. For each mine that is hit, the counter Z is incremented. When it exceeds the maximum tolerance of the boat, it lets you know by printing the message at line 430. Otherwise, any hits are marked with a "+" and the program returns to the main loop.

PROGRAM 7: TYPO

Modifications for Other Micros

For all computers except the Apple II+ and IIe, use lines 900, 910, 930, 940, 950, and 960 from the Master List for your computer.

Also make these changes on the following computers:

Atari:

```
105 DIM KY$(1),NU$(1),S(10)
970 CK=200:RETURN
```

IBM PC and PCjr:

```
970 RANDOMIZE(VAL(RIGHT$(TIME$,2)))
:CK=250:RETURN
```

Commodore 64 and VIC-20:

```
970 RD=RND(-TI):CK=100:RETURN
```

TRS-80 and Color Computer:

```
105 CLEAR 20000  
970 CK=200:RETURN
```

What the Program Does

Typo is a typing practice game. You will see a bunch of letters appear on the screen. You must type in the series of letters *backwards* as quickly as you can. You must *not* make any mistakes! You are training for an important mission. Your lives will depend on not making mistakes later!

How the Program Works

At lines 200 to 230, we print out the ten characters. Beginning at line 240, we scan for input from the keyboard. We look for each of the letters of the character string. If a carriage return or enter key is pressed, the program ends. If you miss a character, it is detected at line 290 and you are told about it. Otherwise the letter is displayed on the screen and you keep going. Each time the keyboard is scanned, the "timer" (TM) ticks once. These ticks are turned into a sort of universal timer based on the speed of your microcomputer by using the variable CK. After you finish (correctly or not) a series of characters, the program loops back to line 140 where you get another series of characters and a chance to practice again.

Remember, *accuracy* is more important than *speed*, but speed is critical. Good luck!

ENEMY: UNKNOWN PERIL: EXTREME



**Your code name is Orion,
and you must defeat a master
of murderous magic!**

Someone or something is after the nation's top athletes. They claim it's voodoo or black magic. As the computer whiz of ACT (Adventure Connection Team) you're not sure. You must use your micro to:

- play a strategy game against a deadly cheat.
- intercept the enemy's secret transmissions.
- stop a computerized countdown a split second before a nuclear missile is detonated.

Spellbound is more than a great adventure story. It's danger, action, and suspense plus computer programs for you to run.

The programs will run in BASIC on the IBM PC, PCjr., APPLE II+, IIe, COMMODORE 64, VIC-20, ATARI 400/800, RADIO SHACK TRS-80 (Level 2 or greater), and RADIO SHACK COLOR COMPUTER.

Includes a reference manual with user tips and explanations of the programs!



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